

**Best Practices for Identifying Hoaxes:
An Analysis of the Methodology of Hadith Transmission**

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Abstract

The *Sahabah* or Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were known as one of the most truthful generations in conveying and receiving information. Their expertise in maintaining the originality and authenticity of the hadith content allows Muslims all over the world to gain an accurate insight about Islam. Hence, it is pivotal to review the method of conveying information of the *Sahabah* to help us identify between real facts and hoaxes. This paper aims to explain the practice of disseminating information among the *Sahabah* using three methods: confirmation, comparison, and coherence. Various narrations of hadith were analyzed to comprehend this method, including the hadith related to history of Anas bin Malik, Abu Bakr al-shiddiq, Ali bin Abi Talib and Aisyah Umm al-Mukminun. Apart from the undoubted credibility of the narrator's personality, the content of these hadith contains an explanation of the methods used by the *Sahabah* in an effort to prove the originality of the information. This paper rests on the argument that information is a major factor in communication process. The application of confirmation, comparison coherence methods in information dissemination is a noteworthy finding.

Keywords: Best Practices, Early Generation, Confirmation, Comparison, Coherence

1. Introduction

In the last ten years, there has been a startling fact about the rampant production of hoaxes in Indonesia at an alarming rate that even may shatter the whole order of life. Fake news or false information are known to trigger various conflicts or even induce tension between communities. Conflicts resulted from fake news have been commonplace amidst the realm of political contestation and the pervasive social relations (Firmansyah et al., 2018; Haryono, 2019; Hutasoit, 2018; Kusno, 2019; Mulyadi, 2014; Nuraki Aziz, 2018; Susilowati, 2019 ; Syarifudin, 2019; Wakid & Sugandi, 2019; Wibowo, 2019). The recent instance on this issue was the fake news surrounding the drafting of Omnibus Law or the *Sapu Jagat* (One-Size-Fits-All) Bill which was passed into law on Monday, 5 October 2020. Since the drafting process, the Omnibus Law on Job Creation (OLCK) has induced a fiercely debated polemic, especially among workers. The polemic was even exacerbated by the innumerable hoaxes circulating on this affair. As a result, a mass

protesters went on strike to go against the passing of this new law, and fueled some riots in various cities (Republika, 5/10/20). Historical records of the 2014 to 2019 Presidential Election revealed that hoaxes have become a powerful political force in shaping the personal image of a prospective political leader. In this line, Kusno (2019) conveyed the notion that hoaxes were used as a strategy to win a candidate pair. Hoaxes have significantly curbed and reduced the electability of one of the candidate pairs and have created fiercer political contestation between the two candidate pairs. Such political tension not only prevails at the political sphere, but also extends to the social sphere that involves individual relations with the public. In early November, for example, the Greater Jakarta area was shocked by the spreading information about 43 crocodiles that had escaped from captivity to the Cisadane River. Muhammad Rizky Pratama was the person who was held accountable to post this fake information on November 3, 2020 on his social media account. The alarming news certainly provoked anxiety and panic among surrounding residents of the Greater Jakarta area (Tribunnews, 7/11/20).

Thus far, the discourse on hoaxes only focuses on the theoretical and conceptual aspect of dissemination of information (Afroz et al., 2012; Aldwairi & Alwahedi, 2018; Dewey, 2016; Finneman & Thomas, 2018; Kumar et al., 2016; Park & Rim, 2019; Prasetijo et al., 2017; Rashkin et al., 2017; Ravitch, 2014; Salam, 2018; Tambuscio et al., 2015b, 2015a; Utami, 2019a, 2019b; Volkova et al., 2017). There were only few studies to discuss the relationship between hoaxes and Islam as found in a limited number of literatures, such as those of Afandi (2018), Al-Ayyubi (2019), Alisyahbana (2019) and Mujib (2018). Overall, communication studies on hoaxes only concern with the way to transfer, exchange, interact with ideas and information through verbal and non-verbal communication practices. Communication science emphasizes the role of the media in the communication process both theoretically and practically. The most heavily studied topic in communication studies is the primary role of the media in the dimensions of micro communication, such as personal rhetoric and facial expression, but there has been a few attempt to take notice of the moral dimension in the communication process.

Departing from the existing literature gap, this paper aims to propose a complementary perspective on the research gap by carefully analyzing how the practices of information dissemination were carried out by the early generations of Muslims known as the Prophet's companions or *Sahabah*. The information dissemination method used by the *Sahabah* was studied in depth to emphasize the moral foundations of communication to ensure not only the delivery of the message but also the validity of the message. This paper highlighted the following three points: first, how the confirmation method can be an alternative strategy in fighting hoaxes; second, how the comparison method can be applied to detect hoaxes. The comparison method is an essential method because it aims to test the validity of the hadith information by presenting witnesses. A *sahabah* can act as a witness for another *sahabah*, or a *sahabah* can be a witness for himself by means of an oath; and third, how the coherence method can reduce the spread of hoax news. This method is applied by testing the correctness of information by comparing between hadiths and verses of the Quran or hadiths with known truths. This paper also focused on the description of the information dissemination practices and the analysis of the implications of their use.

The validity of information is a major factor in the communication process which not only guarantees the delivery of messages but also ensures the benefit of information. Public acceptance of information is normally determined, on the one hand, by the trustworthiness of the informant and, on the other hand, is determined by the high quality of the information conveyed. To achieve a level of validity and quality of information, a process of receiving and evaluating the accuracy

of information is required. Thus, being careful in receiving and conveying information is an absolute necessity, since the wrong transmission of information will lead to detrimental effects to many parties. The impact is not only experienced by those who receive the information, but also felt by the informants and all those who shared in believing the news.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Hoax

From historical records, Juditha (2018) concluded that the term hoax has been around for hundreds of years. This term was coined in 1709 through the creation of fake almanac or fake calendar to cover the death of the astrologer John Partridge. In the early 1800s of the Industrial Revolution in England, hoaxes reappeared as summarized in *The Scientific Media Hoaxes of Poe, Twain, and Others*. This term was also discussed in a book entitled *Hoaxes* written by MacDougall in 1958 as a reflection of a case study that occurred in the United States of the 20th century (Utami, 2019). According to MacDougall, hoaxes are not a new practice born in the digital age. Hoax has existed since the days of Ancient Greece, which was marked by the use of fake news by Octavian in his political battle with Marc Antony to fight Julius Caesar (Utami, 2019). In its essence, Hoax is a form of fraudulent information that aims to create chaos in society (Juditha, 2018). This term is defined as fake news, defamation, and false news (Adhiarso et al., 2017; Ahyad, 2017; Juditha, 2018; Kumar et al., 2016; Pakpahan, 2017; Pratiwi et al., 2018; Rahayu & Sensusiyati, 2020; Septanto, 2018; Situngkir, 2012; Tacchini et al., 2017; Veil et al., 2012), which is intended as a joke and the formation of public opinion (Juditha, 2018).

Utami (2018) in this case, presented her analysis on one form of hoax known as ‘memes’ that are widely circulating at a global level. In her definition, memes are ideas, symbols and practices that have existed for a long time prior to the boom of digital era. However, the presence of Internet features further strengthens the existence of memes and indefinitely spreads its use. According to Santoso et al (2020), the occurrence of hoaxes is not only marked by memes, but also by the circulating threats and fraud on websites and social media. Hoaxes can also be hidden in puns, such as through the use of euphemisms. Iswara et al (2020), defined euphemism as a statement that is manipulative and persuasive, which contains denotative and connotative meanings. The expressive, provocative, and persuasive nature of hoaxes encourages readers to accept its narratives. In addition to memes and language markers that are closely related to hoaxes, Afandi (2018) described several types of hoaxes that are widely circulating in society, namely: fake news, clickbait, confirmation bias, misinformation, satire, post-truth, and propaganda. The form of hoaxes, such as fake news, is classified through the substance of the news. Fake news usually provides fictional (not factual) information and the opposite information. Another form of hoaxes, clickbait, is disseminated through a sensationalized headline that traps users to click a link to a content. The confirmation bias, according to Afandi (2018), is the type of hoaxes that falsify the timing of a particular event. Such occurrence prevails since most people mark a newly released incident as the current event, even though the incident might happen a long time ago. Furthermore, hoaxes are also disseminated through misinformation and satire. Misinformation is defined as the inaccuracy of information, while, satire is understood as a type of writing that uses irony to exaggerate a certain event. The last type of hoaxes, according to Afandi (2018), is post-truth and propaganda. Post-truth is described as a form of excessive dissemination of emotional content to shape public opinion, while propaganda is understood as an activity to widely spread gossip and untruth in large to shape public opinion.

2.2 Information Distribution

The spread of hoaxes in the digital era is reinforced by the role of the media (Maulana, 2017). In line with this, Salam (2018) through his study stated that the presence of media leads to the increasingly massive fake information in the post-truth era. Likewise, Zhang also articulated that the recently circulating news in the media mostly contains dubious information about several events, which created confusion in the community (Zhang & Ghorbani, 2020). Durodolu & Ibenne (2020) also said that many people fell victim for hoaxes because of their ignorance and low literacy proficiency. Hoaxes mainly include the seemingly accurate, important, and up to date information about an event (Tafriet et al., 2019). Paisana's study also mentioned that individuals with high levels of literacy tend to believe the news derived from the media, but do not necessarily accept the content derived from social media as something true (Paisana et al., 2020). In a similar vein, Syam's study even highlighted that students with low levels of information literacy may find it difficult to distinguish between fake news and facts (Syam & Nurrahmi, 2020).

The main characteristics of New media reinforced by the speed of the Internet and the dissemination of information make it easy for the uncontrolled spread of hoaxes. This dissemination of information is not only related to information manipulation, but also fabricated information and unverified satire (Rubin et al., 2015). The disseminated hoaxes is also enhanced by bots or what is commonly known as malicious internet users, which has also affected the massive spread of hoaxes on social media (Ruan et al., 2020). Correspondingly, malicious nodes that are commonplace on the internet will increase the dissemination of fake news on the internet (Ruan et al., 2020). Boyle also said that hoaxes are generally sourced from two aspects: the first is journalists or media institutions, and the second is the sources used by journalists (Nurlatifah, 2019). Wadle (2017) divided the characteristics of misinformation into six types. First, the image captions that do not support the presented content; second, the fake content; third, the manipulated content; fourth, the parody aimed at deceiving the public; fifth, the confusing information, sixth, the designated fraud that aims to endanger others (Wadle, 2017). From these characteristics, it is apparent that the news distributed to the public cannot be separated from media bias, which is mainly influenced by two aspects: media framing and media objectivity (Nurlatifah, 2019).

2.2 Islamic Views of Hoaxes

Islam has long recognized hoaxes in the historical record of its civilization. According to Alisyahbana (2019), the traces of hoaxes in Islam are found in many stories of *Israilliyat*, books of interpretation, the hadith interpretation, to books of Fiqh and Aqedah-Tasawuf. One of the most heavily debated hoaxes in Islam is the *hadithul ifki*. Afandi (2018) described the *hadithul ifki* as the false accusation against the Prophet's wife, Aishah, and Shafwan Ibn Muaththal as Sulamy. This false news was concocted by Abdullah Ibn Ubay, who was known as a hypocrite for not believing in God in his last days. He was also a figure known for inciting the 300 Uhud warriors in Medina to withdraw from the battlefield. Through one of the existing stories, Islam highlights the fact that hoaxes are unjustified. Islam highly against inveterate liars, such as Abdullah Ibn Ubay, because they are capable of harming and injuring others. This notion is well-reflected in the verses of the Quran and hadith. Hoax or fake news is something immoral and sinful. Whoever does it, will be punished and tortured very painfully (Ahmad and Hotimah, 2018). In Islam, the high circulation of hoaxes reflects human habit in telling lies. This condition contradicts the teachings of Islam written in the Quran and the hadith, requiring humans to always maintain honesty.

Humans are obliged to constantly practice honesty in all aspects of life, including their words and the way to convey information (Al-Ayyubi, 2019).

In the midst of this situation, the teachings of Islamic are urgently needed as a guideline in alleviating the rampant spread of hoaxes in society (Afandi, 2018; Ahmad & Hotimah, 2019; Al-Ayyubi, 2019; Aliasan, 2017; Alisyahbana, 2019; Choiroh, 2018; Wifeyani & Widiana, 2016; Khoironi, 2017; Mujib, 2018; Nasution, 2017; Sabiruddin, 2019; Saputra, 2020; Suud, 2017; Suud & Subandi, 2017; Wulandari, 2017). Ahmad and Hotimah (2019) highlighted the urge to accommodate the ethical content curation through the practice of *tabayyun* by each individual. *Tabayyun* is the practice of internalizing values in Islamic education. During the internalization process, Khoironi (2017) considered the importance of the following two stages. The first stage is the transformation of values obtained from both formal and non-formal institutions. This transformation is then applied in the second stage, namely the orientation of improving attitudes and mental health in everyday life. These two stages are well reflected in the 9 Islamic principles of fighting hoaxes as conveyed by Harjani Haefni: sincerity, reward and sin, honesty, positive speech, the principle of two ears and one mouth, supervision, selectivity and validity, balance and justice (Alisyahbana, 2019). This principle must also be based on the normative power that oversees it, namely through the enforcement of Islamic law. Choiroh (2018) believed that Islamic law can protect five necessities (*mashlahah dharuriyah*), namely *deen* or preservation of religion, *nafs* or life, *nasb* or lineage, *aql* or intellect and *mal* or wealth.

3. Research Methods

This topic was selected given the fact that there were only few studies to consider Islam as a frame in dealing with hoax issues. In fact, Islam has provided its guidelines through the experiences of the Prophet's companions when fighting the spread of hoaxes in their time. This paper is based on a qualitative research conducted by compiling basic assumptions and analyzing qualitative data on the research topic. It is written based on constructivism of the social experience of the companions in receiving and retelling the traditions of the Prophet. As primary data, four narrations from four companions were selected and the transmission of hadith methodology was explained. A set of hadith literatures were used as the secondary data, both those related to the Science of Hadith and the interpretation of hadith or hadith books in particular. Secondary data were also obtained from information from various sources related to the subject under study.

The followings are the selected four hadith as the research focus:

1. Anas bin Malik, who tried to confirm the news he heard about the appointment of the Prophet as the The Apostle with a prophetic treatise. (Muslim: 3).
2. Abu Bakr al-Siddiq in his method of comparison of the distribution of inheritance for a grandmother (Abu Dawud: 2507).
3. Ali bin Abi Talib who asked friends to take an oath when narrating hadith (al-Tirmidhi, 371)
4. Aishah Ummul Mu'minin denied the *hadith* of invalidating prayers due to donkey and dogs that crossed our path (al-Bukhari: 773).

The four narrations were selected on the grounds of the undoubted personality traits of the narrators and the content of the hadith that explains the methods used by the *sahabah* to re-check the validity of information using a wide array of methods for such essential information as hadith. The research process began by tracking the narrators of hadith who belong to the Prophet's

companions, totaling around one hundred and fourteen thousand (114,000) people. The data were then restricted by only selecting the *sahabah* who narrated the hadith in the famous hadith books that meet the standard validity, namely the *sahabah* narrator quoted by the six hadith books (kutub al sittah). These *sahabah* numbered eight thousand forty-five (8,045) people. Given this very large number, making it harder to examine each *sahabah* one by one, the inclusion criteria were restricted to the *sahabah* narrator who were widely quoted by *Muhaddithin* when explaining the codification and transmission of hadith in the early first century of Islami year. Among the many mentioned narrators, four *sahabah* were chosen based on the four abovementioned hadith narrations.

This study used content analysis method by closely examining the four narrations of the four *sahabah* (symbol coding). It started with the tracing of the hadith content and the source book of hadith. If the hadith's *sanad* (the chain of continuous narrators) and *matan* (the content of the hadith containing the words of the Prophet saw) were known, a general assessment was made of the quality of the narrators and the hadith *matan*. The assessment rested on the well-known opinions of critics of hadith about the integrity and intellectuality of all the narrators in *sanad*. After formulating a conclusion about the quality of the hadith, the interpretation was carried out through textual and contextual aspects by examining the *asbab al-wurud* (the causes of the emergence of an hadith and the condition around it) and linguistic aspects. The *Asbab al-wurud* was determined based on the general conditions behind the narration of the hadith, both those depicted in the hadith *sanad* and *matan* or those explained by other narrations. The next process was analyzing the hadith in terms of the linguistic aspect and the opinions of the scholars and related it to various contemporary cases relevant with the research topic, namely the best practice of testing the validity of a particular news as a way to prevent the spread of hoaxes.

4. Results

The currently circulating information is laden with untruth content or hate speech which greatly affects public knowledge. During the time of the Prophet, the companions always tried to guarantee the truth of the information they obtained, especially before disseminating the information. The companions of the Prophet are known to apply three methods in examining the truth of information through an in depth study by way of confirmation, comparison, and coherence. The details of these three methods are discussed in the following sections:

4.1. Confirmation Methods Applied by the Companions

The The Apostle never limited his association with his companions, even though not all of the companions were able to be with the Prophet at all times. This fact is given to the fact that the companions also have their daily activities as most humans in the fulfilment of their personal needs and desires. It was once revealed that Umar bin Khatab and his neighbors as the head of household of the wife and children had to work as traders to meet the needs of their families. Despite running their training business, the two companions always strived to attend the Prophet's assembly. Therefore, *'Umar bin Khattab shared his business duties with his neighbors to seek for the latest updates related to the Prophet. 'Umar said, if his neighbor meets the Prophet today, his turn will be the next day. Whoever is on duty and receives the news relating to the Prophet, he immediately delivers the updates to those who are not on duty (al-Bukhariy, 28).*

The *sahabah* were known to apply various methods of checking the validity of information, one of which was through the confirmation method, a method that confirms the validity of information by directly checking information from the main source because the validity of hadith can only be confirmed by the main source of information, namely the Prophet. As the only source of hadith, the confirmation method can only be applied during the life of the Prophet. The confirmation method was used by Anas bin Malik when he heard the news that Muhammad had been appointed as the The Apostle. To start his story in confirming the news he heard, Anas bin Malik said that previously he did not have the opportunity to meet the Prophet even though he had heard the news about the appointment of the Prophet for a long time. Upon meeting the Prophet, Anas bin Malik said:

'O Muhammad, your messenger came to us and claimed that you were claiming that Allah sent you.' The Apostle replied: 'Right'. He asked, 'Who created the heavens?' The Apostle replied: 'Allah.' He asked, 'Who created the earth?' The Apostle replied: 'Allah.' He asked, 'Who has planted the mountains and made everything in them?' He replied: 'Allah.' He asked, 'then for the sake of the One who created the heavens, the earth, and planted the mountains, did Allah send you?' He replied: 'Yes.' He asked, 'Your envoy claims that we are obliged to pray five times a day and night, (is this true)?' He answered: 'Yes'. He asked, 'By the One who sent you, did Allah tell you to do this?' He replied: 'Yes'. He asked, 'Your envoy claims that we are obliged to perform Ramadan fast every year, (is this true)?' He replied: 'Yes'. He asked, 'By the One who sent you, did Allah tell you to do this?' He replied: 'Yes'. He asked, 'By the One who sent you, did Allah tell you to do this?' He replied: 'Yes'. He asked, 'Your envoy claims that we are obliged to perform Hajj for which of us is able to walk His way, (is this true)?' He said, 'Yes, really'. Then he turned and said, 'By the One who sent you with the truth, I will not add to this obligation and will not reduce from it'. So the Prophet said: "If it is true (what he said), surely he will go to heaven'." (Muslim, 13)

The aforementioned story highlights the strategy of the *sahabah* to test the validity of the hadith. This method was applied when they received information about the appointment of the Prophet as the Apostle having a prophetic treatise, and thus they intended to test and confirm the validity of the information by way of making direct confirmation to the primary source of the information. The direct confirmation method was made possible since the Apostle constantly disseminated the teachings and practice of the two main sources of Islamic Law to his companions as the first group to learn about Islam through a direct contact. Some innumerable lessons delivered by the Apostle were considered as new knowledge that was contrary to the applicable custom of the *sahabah* at that time. Therefore, to gain an insight about the lesson and put the teachings into practice, it is not uncommon that the *sahabah* tested the validity of the news by directly confirming with the Prophet. This method is similar to what was done by Prophet Ibrahim (Surah 2: 260). The explanation of the Quranic verses pinpointed how the Prophet Ibrahim questioned about the way of Allah gives life to those who have died. This question arose out of doubt about the greatness of Allah, because it is impossible for a prophet to doubt the power of Allah. Likewise, the confirmation method as applied by Anas bin Malik and other companions of the Prophet' lesson also arose out of doubt of the Prophet's honesty. In fact, the Prophet was widely known for his honesty that the people gave him the title *al-amin* (a trustworthy person). The confirmation method was applied by the *sahabah* to maintain the principle of prudence and thoroughness in receiving

information. The confirmation makes the *sahabah* more confident in accepting and implementing Islamic sharia.

4.2. Comparison: Presenting Other *Sahabah* as Witnesses

The demise of the Prophet made the confirmation method no longer be possible. To test the validity of the hadith information, the *sahabah* then used the comparative method by way of presenting witnesses, or the companions of the Prophet who witnessed firsthand how the Prophet delivered his message. It was possible to present one or two companions as witnesses. A companion could be a witness to another companion who had also received the same information. Abu Bakr al-Siddiq was known to use the comparative method by presenting witnesses for once. As the ruling caliph, Abu Bakr could have answered a question from an old women only based on his own decision. However, what Abu Bakr had done as a form of precise caution because he was a caliph who became a role model for the entire ummah was noteworthy. The hadith narrated the following story:

Qabishah bin Dzuaib once said; There came an old woman to Abu Bakr al-Siddiq who asked him about inheritance. Then he said; you find nothing in the Book of Allah, and I know nothing for you in the sunnah of the Prophet. Come back till I ask people. Then Abu Bakr asked the people, then (al-Mughirah bin Syu'bah) said; I saw that the Messenger of Allah had given him one sixth. Then Abu Bakr said; is there anyone (who witnessed) besides you? Then (Muhammad bin Maslamah) stood up and said like what al-Mughirah bin Syu'bah said. Then Abu Bakr applied it and said; you do not find anything in the Book of Allah, and the decision that has been decided is for other than you, and I will not add in the case of faraidl, but it is one-sixth ... (Abu Dawud: 2507).

Likewise, the oath that a *sahabah* must take when becoming the only witness is part of the hadith comparison method.

Asma` bin al-Hakam al-Fazari once said; "I heard Ali said, "Verily I am a man who if I hear the hadith from the Messenger of Allah, Allah will benefit me. And if any of the companions of the Messenger of Allah tell me a hadith, I ask him to take an oath. If he has taken an oath I will believe him ... (al-Tirmidhi, 371).

This narration reported that Ali bin Abi Talib, as one of the best friends of the Prophet, accustomed himself to hearing the oath of someone who wanted to convey the hadith. The essence of an oath is more valuable than testimony. Someone who takes an oath has presented Allah as the witness. It is only permissible for a Muslim to take an oath by saying the name of Allah alone, not other than Him. A Muslim is not encouraged to take an oath a lot even in a state of urgency. From this explanation, it is clear that the comparative method by presenting witnesses or taking an oath can be one way to combat hoaxes. The comparative method during the time of the Prophet's companions was applicable through the presence of witnesses from the *sahabah* circle who witnessed an event or a *sahabah* who took an oath by presenting Allah as a witness.

4.3. Coherence between of *Sahih* (Authentic) Verses and Hadith

In addition to the comparative method, the validity of the hadith information during the time of the Prophet's companions was also tested by the coherence method. Similar to comparative

method, the coherence method was also applied by way of comparing. However, it was not performed by presenting the *sahabah* as witnesses or taking oaths, but by comparing between the hadiths and the verses of the Quran or the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad that have been verified within the same scope of the theme. The conformity of information between the hadiths or verses of the Quran becomes the basis for determining the validity of information. Coherence concerns with the attempt to ensure the logic of a particular information as seen from the main reference, the Quran and hadith as the legal basis for Muslims.

This method of coherence was once used by Aisha *Umm al-Mukminin* when she came to Abu Hurairah with a hadith. She was once told that the Apostle had said:

... Someone's prayer can be invalidated by the absence of a barrier in front of him, so that women, donkey and dogs pass by (al-Bukhariy, 469).

Aisha criticized the hadith and explained the followings:

She had seen the Apostle praying, while she was lying on her back on a mat not far from the Prophet. Then, Aisha stretched out her legs before the Apostle. At that time, the Prophet continued his prayer until he finished it (al-Bukhariy, 773).

According to Aisyah, if she relies on the hadith she narrated, the narrative reported by Abu Hurairah will be rejected in terms of meaning. If someone is praying, and in front of him is a person who falls asleep, his prayer will not be invalidated, especially if the other person is just passing through.

One of the reasons for implementing the coherence method is the inability to implement the comparison method. This condition was because none of the *sahabah* could be presented as witnesses, either because no *sahabah* were present when the problem was raised or because the *sahabah* had become old and died. The basis for implementing the coherence method for validating hadith is by comparing the meaning of the two main argumentative tools. There is no one who is able to deny the truth of the Quran as the *qath'i* (definite legal rule) as well as the traditions of the Prophet, which were widely known for its authenticity. Thus, there had been an increasing use of coherence method, especially when there were no more companions who could be witnesses. The coherence method had also been used widely during the *tabi'in*, *Tābi' al-Tāb'in* era, the later generations, and even during the time of Islamic scholars and the current Muslims to test the validity of hadith in fighting against hoaxes.

5. Discussion

This research demonstrated the best practices of the Prophet's companions in preventing untrue or misleading information in the dissemination of information during their time. The best practices of information dissemination as applied by the *sahabah* can be an alternative solution to stop the currently extensive spread of hate speech as commonplace today. Even after the demise of the Prophet, the *sahabah* were known to constantly apply these best practices in information dissemination. Three methods were continuously applied to ensure the validity of information before it is received or disseminated: confirmation, comparison, and coherence. These three methods may serve as the basis for examining the validity of information so as to avert from the public anxiety and conflicts resulted from misleading information. These methods provide us with

alternative solutions to the uncontrolled problem of hate speech that has been continuously produced and disseminated in the last six years.

The findings in this paper reflect the importance of *tabayyun* or the search for information sources as a mechanism to counter hoaxes. The principle of *tabayyun* is still being held to this day. Given what Maulana (2017) said, the spread of hoaxes in the digital era is strengthened by the role of the media, making it more difficult for Muslims to ward off fake news. In the digital era, hoaxes are created with make-believe contents on the grounds of logical arguments, leading us to believe the validity and error-free nature of the content.

The turn to digital age has made it even harder for us to manually trace the validity of information as was done by the *sahabah* in the early days of Islam. The technological advancement has also allowed massive distribution of misleading and emotionally touching information to trigger the readers. The only way to confirm its validity is by way of sophisticated technological application. In line with this, Paisana et al (2020) asserted the importance of information literacy knowledge as a way to prevent someone from the trap of hoaxes, especially from the hoaxes circulating on social media as the focal point of its spread.

The application of confirmation, comparison, and coherence between the Quranic verses and hadiths to ensure the validity of information at the time of the Prophet and his companions indicates that there will be serious problems if the information is not properly filtered. Their method of filtering information was considered as the most advanced method in its day that involved various layers of confirmation process for any information received. This article revealed that the prudent attitude exercised by the *sahabah* shows that information may lead to danger if it is taken for granted. The principles of best practices in filtering information is a form of literacy mechanism that can be performed today. This fact highlight the need to learn from the way the *sahabah* prevented hoaxes.

Previous studies were inclined to present a partial study of hoaxes in Islam (Jati Wahyuni, 2019; Afandi, 2018; Walidah, 2018; Alisyahbana, 2019), or thematic studies regarding the study of the Quran on hoaxes (Jati Wahyuni, 2019; Roijah, 2020; Sa'diyah, 2019). For instance, Alisyahbana (2019) only analyzed the values of Islamic principles to combat hoaxes through 9 principles, namely sincerity, reward and sin, honesty, positive speech, the principle of two ears and one mouth, supervision, selectivity and validity, balance and justice. In line with Alisyahbana (2019), Khoironi (2017) only explored hoaxes through conceptual methods by way of the process of internalization obtained informally, formally, or institutionally and through the practice of the values and attitudes of everyday life. The novelty of this research, as compared to the existing research, is the emphasis on the best practices in the early days of Islam in warding off hoaxes by way of confirmation, comparison, and coherence of valid verses and hadiths. It is essential to put these methods into practice by applying multiple filter on information that has the potential to contain hoaxes.

The researches on the dangers of hoaxes emphasizes the need for a more concrete and current systematic mechanism to ward off the dangers of hoaxes in the future. By referring to the experience of the Prophet's companions in handling this matter, we need to create a system that can overcome the dangers of disinformation in society, especially among Muslims. Religious institutions, such as the Indonesian Ulema Council and religious organizations in Indonesia, need to determine the current ways to counteract the hoaxes that are increasingly commonplace on social

media. An application software needs to be made, because the current hoax data is no longer in the form of direct statements, but in the form of digital information and digital religious content of proselytizing (*da'wah*). Such content, to some extent, may contain a particular dimension of truth and be based on logical coherence, that can convincingly lead us to believe that it is valid, instead of hoaxes.

6. Conclusion

The key finding of this study is that there has been an applicable method to eradicate hoax since prophetic times. This method is apparent in the best practices applied by the *sahabah* to crosscheck the authenticity of the hadith information using three methods. The first is the confirmation method, by ensuring the accuracy of the information through the main source of the information. The second method is a comparison, by presenting witnesses and taking an oath to strengthen the validity of information. The third method is coherence by comparing between authentic verses of the Quran and the hadith. The coherence method is interpreted as a comparative analytical method that can be applied by everyone with a comparative tool having argumentative power, or it can also be done by the expert as was done by Abu Huairah. If criticism has to be made, either on the meaning or the credibility of the narrator, the submission is only to assess the possibility of defects in the narrative. It does not affect social relations, let alone intends to expose the narrator's disgrace. The *sahabah* applied the consolidation process for all hadith, even for hadith known for its authenticity. An assessment of the integrity of the personality and intellectual capacity of the narrator is needed because the object of a hadith discussion does not refer to one particular law, but may serve as a comparison (*qarinah*) to be used as evidence and legal explanation. Therefore, the three methods to learn from the experiences of the prophet and his companions shall be considered as the best practices in combating the current spread of hoaxes.

This paper contributes to the framing of Islam in fighting hoaxes. Through the constructivism method, the experiences of the prophet and his companions can serve as a guide and lesson learned to fight against hoaxes. The four hadith used also provide insight into the existing experiences. The history of Anas bin Malik tells us the story of the Prophet's companions who used the confirmation method in denying any news. The narrative of the hadith of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq can help us ward off hoaxes through the comparative method in the form of witnesses. Ali Bin Abi Talib's hadith history recounts a history of a friend who took an oath to legitimize the truth of information. Likewise, the narrative of the hadith of Aishah Ummul Mu'minin illustrates the importance of the coherence method to understand the main source of the hadith for any information and news. The four hadith are declared valid because they are not only based on the personality traits of the narrator, but also based on the content that describes the methods of fighting hoaxes at that time. The concepts used in the form of defining hoaxes, distribution of information, and Islamic views on hoaxes also provide essential support for this paper, such as the important meaning of *tabayyun* in fighting hoaxes.

Despite its contribution in explaining hoaxes in Islamic context, this paper still has limitations because it only describes a historical aspect of the experiences of the Prophet's companions in fighting hoaxes. Some of the existing methods, such as comparison, are not applicable today because hoaxes are not only rampant in the community but also highly circulating in social media, and so is the data source. There are other hadith narrations that explain about methods of fighting hoaxes in Islam, which are out of the scope of this research due to the research limitations in obtaining data sources. For this reason, a more comprehensive study is needed to see

how Islam is able to defend against hoaxes with the narration of hadiths and in ways that are relevant to the current conditions.

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