

# Preventing the Spread of Fake News: Insights from the Holy Quran for Ethical Communication in the Digital Age

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## Abstract

The spread of fake news has increasingly disrupted public trust and social harmony. This paper investigates the prevention of fake news through the teachings of the Holy Quran. It explores Quranic principles related to truth, justice, and ethical communication, emphasizing their relevance to modern media practices. By drawing on Quranic injunctions about verifying information, avoiding falsehood, and upholding integrity, the study aims to provide a framework for mitigating the impact of misinformation. The paper offers practical recommendations for individuals and media organizations to adhere to these principles, fostering a more truthful and responsible approach to information dissemination.

**Keywords:** Fake news, Holy Quran, Islamic ethics, truth, communication

## Introduction

In the current era of social media and instant communication, the spread of misinformation and fake news has become a significant challenge. Fake news can incite fear, mistrust, and even violence, disrupting societies and undermining trust in information sources. The Holy Quran, as the ultimate guide for Muslims, provides clear instructions on the importance of

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truthfulness and the dangers of spreading false information. This research aims to analyze the Quranic perspective on preventing the spread of fake news. It seeks to explore the ethical responsibilities of Muslims and the practical steps outlined in Islamic teachings to counter the dissemination of unverified or false information. 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. Nowadays, social media has been abundant successful for sharing information to each another. In Digital era, mostly people are used social media nowadays and get information from news channels and social networks like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube etc.

### **What is Fake News**

"Fake news" has emerged as a global problem in recent years, that increased bizarre challenges for democracy and human society. Fake news is defined as information that has no supporting facts but is portrayed as factually accurate and is ingested by thousands through television, radio, websites, or social media. False news is information or news that has been manufactured and cannot be verified through sources, facts, or quotes. This includes "zombie claims" (pictures or postings that have been altered or edited to look real and keep surfacing on social media), conspiracies, hoaxes, false websites, clickbait pages masquerading as legitimate websites, memes, and YouTube channels impersonating as authoritative channels. The reputation of any person or industry, including politics, health, stock, sports, and finance, can be ruined by hoaxes or fake stories. In casual conversation, on social media, and in the news media, the term "fake news" has been used frequently. Calling anything "fake news" in a political setting is a tactic used to confuse or undermine politicians and distribute false information. Axios and Survey Monkey conducted a study, which found that 72% of Americans think "major media publications report news they know are false." For instance, in 2016, Buzz Feed News identified "Obama had issued an executive order while forbidding pledges of allegiance in schools across the country" as the most popular fake news on Facebook. The purpose of the content was to undermine Obama's standing during the 2016 US elections. More than 1,000 political and election-related reports from the Jakarta Gubernatorial Election in 2017 proved to be false. The state news agency of Qatar reported in 2017 that its Twitter account had been hacked, and the hackers had posted fake comments criticizing the Arab Gulf and US foreign policy toward Iran. Neighboring nations like Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt severed diplomatic ties with Qatar as a result of the bogus remarks. Fake news affects more than just politics; it can also have an impact on your health, your vacation, and your business. However, sometimes it can take a lot of time to figure out the news's source and confirm its accuracy. This is where technology can help.

### **2. Quranic Perspective on Truth and Falsehood**

The Quran emphasizes the importance of truthfulness and warns against the spreading of falsehood. Several verses in the Quran address the issue of verifying information before sharing it with others:

- **Surah Al-Hujurat (49:6):**

"O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information,

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investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful."

This verse highlights the importance of verification and caution when receiving information. It serves as a foundation for preventing the spread of fake news, urging believers to critically assess the credibility of the sources before sharing any information.

• **Surah An-Nur (24:15-16):**

"When you received it with your tongues and said with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge and thought it was insignificant while it was, in the sight of Allah, tremendous. And why, when you heard it, did you not say, 'It is not for us to speak of this. Exalted are You, [O Allah]; this is a great slander.'"

These verses caution against speaking or spreading information without knowledge. The Quran condemns the act of passing on information without verification, stressing that such actions can have severe consequences.

### 3. Ethical Guidelines for Muslims in Preventing Fake News

Islamic teachings provide a comprehensive ethical framework for Muslims to follow in their daily lives, including how they communicate and share information.

Only after acquiring and properly evaluating information or news may it be shared or disseminated in accordance with Islamic norms. Allah said in Quran

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

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

Individual responsibilities and community relations are also regulated by Islam's fundamental principles of enjoining good and forbidding evil. Allah (S.W.T) said in holy Quran

"وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ"

"And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong,<sup>1</sup> and those will be the successful". (Qur'Ēn, 3:104).

The uncontrolled freedom to publish news to mould people's opinions for the goal of certain interests, including political, religious, or individual, is a major role in the propagation of hoaxes or fake news. Most hoaxes or fake news are released to slander, damage, and blame others, or to suggest that certain persons or platforms are superior to others. So, whoever is involved in issuing or distributing such unauthentic or unjustifiable news and information for personal gain commits grave crimes that will result in Allah's judgment. Those who generate or begin such fabricated news or hoaxes are unquestionably committing the sin of lying or slander, which is strictly forbidden in Islam. Our Last Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

"حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مُبَيْرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ، وَوَكَيْعٌ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا الْأَعْمَشُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا الْأَعْمَشُ، ح وَحَدَّثَنَا أَبُو كُرَيْبٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا الْأَعْمَشُ، عَنْ شَقِيقٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: **ر: "عَلَيْكُمْ بِالصِّدْقِ فَإِنَّ الصِّدْقَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْبِرِّ وَإِنَّ الْبِرَّ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَمَا يَزَالُ الرَّجُلُ يَصْدُقُ وَيَتَحَرَّى الصِّدْقَ حَتَّى يَكْتَبَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ صِدْقًا وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَالْكَذِبَ فَإِنَّ الْكَذِبَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْفُجُورِ وَإِنَّ الْفُجُورَ يَهْدِي إِلَى النَّارِ وَمَا يَزَالُ الرَّجُلُ يَكْذِبُ وَيَتَحَرَّى الْكَذِبَ حَتَّى يَكْتَبَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَذِبًا"**.

Abdullah reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying:

"It is obligatory for you to tell the truth, for truth leads to virtue and virtue leads to Paradise,

and the man who continues to speak the truth and endeavours to tell the truth is eventually recorded as truthful with Allah, and beware of telling of a lie for telling of a lie leads to obscenity and obscenity leads to Hell-Fire, and the person who keeps telling lies and endeavours to tell a lie is recorded as a liar with Allah.” (SahÊh Muslim, 2607).

عن أبي هريرة " أن رسول الله ﷺ قال: "آية المنافق ثلاث: إذا حدث كذب، وإذا وعد أخلف، وإذا أُوْتِمَنَ خان" (متفق عليه).

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported:

Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "There are three signs of a hypocrite: When he speaks, he lies; when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and when he is trusted, he betrays his trust." (Sahih al-BukhÊrÊ, 33. TirmÊdhÊ, 2631).

Based on the above Hadiths, it is apparent that lying, slandering, and fabricating are signs of hypocrites and evil doers, and that obscenity leads to Hell-Fire. As a result, AllÊh SWT advises us not to publicize or broadcast any harm.

«لَا يُحِبُّ اللَّهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوِّءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلِمَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا عَلِيمًا»

"Allah does not like the public mention of evil except by one who has been wronged. And ever is Allah Hearing and Knowing". (Qur'Ên, 4:148).

The important Arabic term in this verse is 'al-jahr,' which means "publicizing or broadcasting," and the term s', which means "evil comment, evil speech." Thus, according to Mohammad Hashim Kamali (Kamali, 167), this passage warns against spreading any type of bad news, remarks, or opinions. Similarly, Allah SWT commanded us not to perform any humiliating crimes or wrongdoings..

"قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَنَا خَرَّمٌ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَلَّا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِنْ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ذَلِكَُمْ وَصَاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ"

"Say, Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you. [He commands] that you not associate anything with Him, and to parents, good treatment, and do not kill your children out of poverty; We will provide for you and them. And do not approach immoralities – what is apparent of them and what is concealed. And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed] except by [legal] right. This has He instructed you that you may use reason." (Qur'Ên, 6:151).

Those who distribute hoaxes or fake news without explanation commit major offences under Islamic ethics. This inappropriate conduct or activity undoubtedly contributes to the spread of misinformation, fake news, and slander on social media, which is contrary to Islamic behavioral principles. Spreading hoaxes and false information about anybody, as well as slandering someone, is considered defamation. Allah SWT commands Muslims to refrain from insulting, hurting, or defaming others. The Holy Quran stated:

"إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ. يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْعَى قَوْمٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْإِسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ"

"O, you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name [i.e., mention] of disobedience after [one's] faith. And whoever does not repent – then it is those who are the wrongdoers." (Qur'Ên, 49:11).

During the Prophet's (PBUH) reign, certain hypocrites and wicked people propagated false

news and misinformation in Madina, destroying Muslim and community peace. (Sab'Eni, 1:292). They proceeded to sow doubts, promote false tales, and spread propaganda in order to exploit Muslims and destabilize the Madina state. (S.M Hasan al-Banna: 2007). Allah SWT highlighted their deceptions and disgusting actions by revealing the following Qur'anic verse:

"وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ  
وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا"

"And when there comes to them something [i.e., 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 favor of Allah upon you and His mercy, you would have followed Satan, except for a few." (Qur'En, 4:83).

According to the Quran, no Muslim is permitted to initiate or publicize hoaxes, falsehoods, or fake news. Such obscene behaviors, as marks of disobedience and hypocrisy, will undoubtedly lead to the penalty of hellfire. As a result, Islam devised several ethical rules and concepts that Muslims must be aware of in order to avoid wrongdoings or evil.

حَدَّثَنَا مُوسَى بْنُ إِسْمَاعِيلَ، حَدَّثَنَا وَهْبٌ، حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ طَاوُسٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ "إِيَّاكُمْ وَالظَّنَّ فَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ أَكْذَبُ الْحَدِيثِ،  
وَلَا تَحَسَّسُوا، وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا، وَلَا تَبَاغَضُوا، وَلَا تَدَابَرُوا، وَكُونُوا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ إِخْوَانًا."

Narrated by Abu Huraira: Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "Beware of suspicion, for it is the worst of false tales and don't look for the other's faults and don't spy and don't hate each other, and don't desert (cut your relations with) one another O Allah's slaves, be brothers!" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 6724. Sahih Muslim, 2563).

Second, ridicule is one of the initial causes of the creation or dissemination of hoaxes, lies, and provocation. Laughing at or making fun of someone is forbidden in Islam. Allah forbids it clearly and reminds us that people we mock may actually be better than us.

"يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُوا قَوْمًا مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءً مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَرُوا  
بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْأِسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ"

"O, you who have believed, let not a group of people mock [other] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women mock [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of shamelessness after [one's] faith. And whoever does not repent – then it is those who are the wrongdoers." [Qur'En 49:11].

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ إِدْرِيسَ، عَنْ دَاوُدَ، عَنِ الشَّعْبِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي جَبْرِ بْنِ الصَّخَّالِ، قَالَ فِيْنَا نَزَلَتْ مَعْشَرَ الْأَنْصَارِ (وَلَا تَنَابَرُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ)  
قَدِيمَ عَلَيْنَا النَّبِيِّ: r. وَالرَّجُلُ مِنَّا لَهُ الْإِسْمَانِ وَالثَّلَاثَةُ فَكَانَ النَّبِيُّ r زَمًا دَعَاهُمْ بِبَعْضِ تِلْكَ الْأَسْمَاءِ فَيُقَالُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ يَغْضَبُ مِن هَذَا. فَتَزَلَتْ (وَلَا  
تَنَابَرُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ)".

It was narrated that Abu Jab'Érah bin Dahh'Ék said: (Allah's saying) "Nor insult one another by nicknames (Surah Al Hujur'Ét 49:11)" was revealed concerning us, the Ansar. When the Prophet(ﷺ) came to us, a man among us would have two or three names, and the Prophet(ﷺ) might call him by one of those names, only to be told: "O Messenger of Allah(ﷺ), he does not like that name." Then: "Nor insult one another by nicknames." was revealed." (Musnad Ahmad, 18288. Sunan Ibn Majah, 3741).

The right to privacy is a sacred human right that no one (not even journalists) can violate...

[and] in the pursuit of good, Islam forbids anybody, including journalists, from spying and seeking to confirm suspicions, defamation, rumor spreading, and name calling." (Baig: 2008). Fourth, before publishing or disseminating any information or news, it must be investigated and justified. A Muslim must verify the authenticity of any news or information before believing it, which prevents him or her from publicizing or distributing hoaxes, fake news, or slander. According to the Holy Qur'Ēn:

"يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلٰى مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ"

"O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful." (Qur'Ēn 49:6).

The following principles derived from the Quran can guide Muslims in preventing the spread of fake news:

### **3.1. Verification of Information (Tahqiq):**

Muslims are encouraged to verify the authenticity of any information they receive before sharing it. The Quran explicitly warns against accepting and spreading unverified news, as it can lead to harmful consequences.

### **3.2. Avoidance of Gossip and Slander (Gheebah and Buhtan):**

The Quran strongly discourages gossip and slander, which are often the root causes of fake news. Spreading unverified information can harm individuals and communities, and Islam calls for restraint and responsibility in communication.

### **3.3. Accountability and Consequences (Ihsan and Taqwa):**

Muslims are reminded to be mindful of their actions and the potential impact of spreading false information. The concepts of Ihsan (doing good) and Taqwa (God-consciousness) encourage believers to act with integrity and consider the consequences of their words and actions.

### **3.4. Promotion of Truth (Sidq):**

The Quran encourages believers to speak the truth at all times. Muslims are urged to be advocates of truth, even in difficult circumstances, and to reject falsehood in all its forms.

## **4. Modern Application of Quranic Teachings in Preventing Fake News**

In the digital age, where information spreads rapidly through social media and other online platforms, applying Quranic principles is more crucial than ever. Muslims can take the following practical steps to prevent the spread of fake news:

### **4.1. Critical Thinking and Media Literacy:**

Muslims should develop critical thinking skills and media literacy to discern credible sources of information. By understanding how misinformation spreads and recognizing biased or false narratives, they can avoid becoming part of the problem.

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#### **4.2. Responsible Sharing and Forwarding:**

Before sharing any news or information, Muslims should ensure that it comes from a reliable source and has been verified. The Quranic injunction to verify information should serve as a guiding principle in online communication.

#### **4.3. Encouraging a Culture of Accountability:**

Muslim communities should promote a culture of accountability where individuals are encouraged to question the authenticity of information and avoid sharing unverified news. Religious leaders and scholars can play a pivotal role in educating the community on the importance of responsible communication.

#### **4.4. Reporting and Countering Fake News:**

Muslims should actively report fake news and misinformation when they encounter it. Additionally, they can contribute to countering false narratives by sharing accurate information and promoting truth.

#### **The Impact of Fake News**

Fake news undermines public trust, spreads misinformation, and can have serious consequences for societies. The proliferation of false information has been linked to various societal issues, including polarization and erosion of democratic processes. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach, including ethical guidelines informed by religious and philosophical traditions.

### **3. Quranic Teachings on Truthfulness and Integrity**

The Holy Quran provides explicit guidance on the importance of truthfulness and the ethical responsibilities of individuals. Key verses include:

- **Surah Al-Hujurat (49:6):** "O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient person with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance..."
- **Surah Al-Isra (17:81):** "And say, 'Truth has come, and falsehood has vanished. Indeed, falsehood is by nature bound to vanish.'"

These verses underscore the necessity of verifying information and maintaining integrity in communication. They serve as a foundation for ethical media practices that can prevent the spread of fake news.

### **5. Conclusion**

The Holy Quran provides clear guidance on the importance of truthfulness and the prevention of spreading false information. By adhering to the ethical principles outlined in the Quran, Muslims can play a significant role in combating fake news and promoting a culture of truth and integrity in their communities. In an age where misinformation can have far-reaching consequences, the Quranic teachings on communication are more relevant than ever. The advent of digital media has exponentially increased the spread of information, but it has also facilitated the rapid dissemination of fake news. This paper seeks to address the issue of fake news by examining Quranic principles that emphasize the importance of truth and integrity. Understanding these principles can offer valuable insights into improving

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media practices and fostering a more truthful information environment.

**References**

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