
Avoiding Fitnah: A Review of Islamic Communication Ethics

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the ethics of communication in the context of Islam, with a focus on avoiding slander. This study is conducted to understand the Islamic perspective on slander and provide guidelines for ethical communication that can be applied in daily life. The findings of the research show that Islam emphasizes the importance of communicating with good ethics, avoiding slander, and disseminating truthful and beneficial information. Slander is considered a serious sin in Islam because it can tarnish one's reputation, damage social relationships, and trigger conflicts in society. Therefore, Islamic ethics of communication stress the importance of verifying information before spreading it, combating gossip, and speaking with kind and meaningful words. This research contributes to understanding the ethics of communication in the context of Islam and the importance of avoiding slander. The implications of this research highlight the need for the application of Islamic principles of communication ethics in daily life, both in verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as in social media and the digital world. It is hoped that the findings of this research can provide practical guidance for Muslims in communicating with good ethics, building harmonious relationships, and strengthening unity in society.

Keywords: Slander; Islamic Communication Ethic.

INTRODUCTION

In the fast-paced and rapidly evolving digital era, the phenomenon of slander or the spread of false information has become an increasingly concerning issue in the context of communication within society (Murtiningsih, 2020). Slander can easily spread through social media and other digital platforms, resulting in serious harm to individuals and groups (Juditha, 2018). In the context of Islam, slander is considered a destructive action that goes against the taught ethical values (Kriyantono, 2014).

Based on various reports and studies, there has been an increase in cases of slander in communication, both through social media and directly. The abundance of social media platforms and the ease of spreading information have made slander easier and faster to disseminate (Rohman, 2016). False or unverified information can quickly go viral and defame the reputation of individuals or groups. Furthermore, several studies have revealed that the phenomenon of slander in online communication is often driven by the desire to

create sensation, gain attention, or even specific political or commercial purposes (Fensi, 2018). This indicates that the issue of slander in communication is not only individual-oriented but also connected to complex social, political, and economic factors. The spread of false information without verification leads to doubt and mistrust within society. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the Islamic perspective on slander and apply good communication ethics in everyday life.

In mapping previous research, earlier studies have contributed to understanding communication ethics in the Islamic context (Susanto, 2016), but there has been limited exploration specifically on avoiding slander. Hence, this research aims to fill this gap by focusing on avoiding slander within the context of Islamic communication ethics.

Through a literature review, this research will delve into primary sources such as the Quran and Hadith, as well as the perspectives of Islamic scholars and experts, to gain a deeper understanding of the Islamic perspective on slander and the ethical communication principles to be applied. The objective of this research is to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the importance of avoiding slander within the context of Islamic communication ethics and provide practical guidance for Muslim individuals to communicate well and responsibly.

The benefits of this research lie in providing a better understanding of communication ethics in the Islamic context, particularly in avoiding slander. It is hoped that this will contribute to building more dignified communication, reducing the spread of false information, and strengthening harmonious relationships within the Muslim community. The theoretical framework used in this research will encompass the concepts of Islamic communication ethics, Islamic views on slander, the principles of good communication in Islam, and the relevance of these perspectives in the current context of social media and the digital world.

By conducting this research, it is expected to provide a strong theoretical foundation, a better understanding of Islamic communication ethics, and practical guidelines that can be applied by Muslim individuals to avoid slander and build dignified and ethical communication.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method employed in this study is qualitative method. The research data was obtained through literature review and theoretical analysis related to Islamic communication ethics and avoiding slander. The literature review involved the analysis of various sources such as the Quran, Hadith, books, journals, and relevant articles. The theoretical analysis involved examining the perspectives of Islamic scholars and experts on communication ethics and the avoidance of slander in Islam. The collected data was analyzed using thematic

analysis techniques to identify patterns, themes, and concepts related to communication ethics and avoiding slander. The data interpretation was conducted considering Islamic perspectives, principles of communication ethics, and the avoidance of slander. The findings of this research are expected to provide practical guidance for Muslim individuals to communicate effectively and responsibly in their daily lives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Slander According to the Qur'an

The research findings reveal that in the context of Islam, avoiding slander (fitnah) is an important aspect of ethical communication that should be highly upheld. Slander is considered an act that is destructive and contrary to Islamic values that prioritize truth, justice, and purity of the heart. In the Quran, Allah SWT emphasizes the importance of speaking with good and honest words and warns Muslims to stay away from slander.

Slander in the Indonesian Dictionary is defined as a false or unfounded statement that is spread with the intention of defaming someone, such as defamation of character or in other forms of honor (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, 2021). Sonhaji also mentioned this. He stated that slander is the dissemination of news without any basis of truth, which essentially aims to harm others (Sonhaji & Suratno, 2005).

The above definition seems different from the meaning used in the Arabic language. Fitnah in Arabic is more interpreted as a specific property to be burned (in the form of metals: gold or silver) in order to obtain purity (al-Fairuzabadi & fi Lataif, 2000). The Quran itself and its derivatives use the word fitnah about 60 times (Abdul-Baqi, 1981). Even the Quran interprets the word fitnah in many different ways depending on the context of the verse; sometimes the word fitnah refers to disaster, idolatry, trial, temptation, punishment, injustice, misguidance, and even includes the category of madness (Habibuddin, 2012). Thus, what is used as a basis for the meaning of fitnah, the Quran is more general in nature than the partial meaning used in the Indonesian Dictionary; although the meaning still refers to an action that is not good or an act that will cause greater danger. Even some of these meanings, if conditioned with the meaning found in the Indonesian Dictionary, as mentioned above, will have different judgments. One prominent difference is the limited interpretation of the meaning of fitnah based on the Indonesian Dictionary, limited to defamation of character or implicitly related to honor itself. That is, the scope of fitnah is so binding in a partial context. Even its form can directly indicate the act of slander, although it cannot be

explicitly clarified whether the act of slander is categorized as the nature of someone who likes to slander.

Apart from the intended meaning above, the Quran, based on Quraish Shihab's explanation, broadly contains meanings in the Quran, including the following (Shihab, 2021):

1. Fitnah as a meaning of punishment (the remnants of the fire of hell) (QS. Adz-Dzariyat: 14)

ذُوقُوا فِتْنَتَكُمْ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ

(It is said to them): "Taste your punishment. This is the punishment that you have hastened (to bring).

2. Fitnah as a meaning of bringing trials (torture), bringing disaster, killing (QS al-Buruj: 10)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَتَنُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا فَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ الْحَرِيقِ

Indeed, those who bring trials to the believers, both men and women, and they do not repent, then for them is the punishment of Hell, and for them is the punishment (of the burning fire).

3. Fitnah comes as a trial or test (QS al-Anfal: 28)

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا آمَاكُمُ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ □

And know that your wealth and your children are only a trial, and indeed, with Allah is a great reward.

4. Fitnah means deception, falsehood, or deviation from the truth (QS. Al-Maidah: 49 and in QS. Al-A'raf; 11)

وَأَن احْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَاحْذَرْهُمْ أَن يَفْتِنُوكَ عَن بَعْضِ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَم أَنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَن يُصِيبَهُم بِبَعْضِ ذُنُوبِهِمْ وَإِن كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ لَفَاسِقُونَ

And you should judge between them by what Allah has revealed and not follow their inclinations. And beware of them, lest they tempt you away from some of what Allah has revealed to you. If they turn away, then know that Allah intends to afflict them for some of their sins. Indeed, most of the people are defiantly disobedient.

يَبْنَیْ آدَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبَوَيْكُم مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ يَنزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْءَ بَيْتِهِمَا إِنَّهُ يَرَاكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيلُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

O children of Adam, let not Satan tempt you as he removed your parents from Paradise, stripping them of their clothing to show them their private parts. Indeed, he sees you, he and his tribe, from where you do not see them. Indeed, we have made the devils allies to those who do not believe.

5. **Fitnah means causing chaos, such as expelling companions from their homes, seizing their belongings, and harming or interfering with their religious freedom.**

Fitnah can also refer to apostasy, disbelief, or polytheism (Surah Al-Baqarah: 191)

وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ تَوَفَّقْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَخْرَجُوهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجْتُمُوهُمْ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ ۗ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوهُمْ
عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّى يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِيهِ فَإِنْ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ كَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكُفْرِينَ

"And kill them wherever you find them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you, and fitnah is worse than killing. And do not fight them at al-Masjid al-Haram until they fight you there. But if they fight you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers."

Furthermore, the theme of fitnah echoes in various historical accounts, beginning with the time of the Rightly Guided Caliphs or after the death of the Prophet. Subsequent conflicts, such as the war between Ali and Mu'awiyah, the Battle of the Camel, the events between the Khawarij and the Shia, the downfall of the Umayyad dynasty, and the emergence of regional rulers in the early 11th century, or other major events within the Muslim community, are often viewed by scholars as fitnah between groups or organizations with different interests. Hence, sometimes any action that surpasses human capacity or something disliked by people is considered fitnah. This demonstrates that the term fitnah in societal events refers to the meaning used in the Qur'an. The terminology employed by the Qur'an is deemed suitable for revealing, detailing, and identifying issues that must be resolved by humans as problem-solving efforts to interpret the meaning of fitnah found in the Qur'an (Sonhaji & Suratno, 2005).

Media Ethics Overview

Media ethics encompasses a set of principles and norms that govern the behavior and responsibility of the media in presenting information to the public (Ward, 2011). Theoretically, media ethics reflects the view that media play a crucial role as guardians of truth, shapers of public opinion, and enablers of societal participation in the communication process (Patterson et al., 2018). Media ethics emphasizes values such as honesty, fairness, integrity, and transparency as the foundation for reporting news and presenting information to the audience (White, 2010).

One important concept in media ethics is avoiding defamation. Defamation is considered an act that harms and tarnishes the reputation of individuals or groups through the dissemination of false or untrue information. In the context of media ethics, avoiding defamation means ensuring that the information presented by the media is accurate, well-verified, and based on

reliable sources. Media must exercise caution in disseminating information to avoid causing serious harm to the individuals or groups involved.

Applying good media ethics in avoiding defamation also involves maintaining balance and objectivity in reporting news. Avoid biases or worsening situations by presenting information that is biased or detrimental to one party. Additionally, media should be transparent about the sources of information and any potential conflicts of interest involved in a news story. If mistakes occur, media should be honest and accountable by acknowledging errors and providing prompt corrections.

By adhering to the concepts of media ethics, it is hoped that the media can function as responsible and reputable institutions, earning the trust of the public. Applying good media ethics in avoiding defamation will help build public trust in the media, prevent conflicts arising from false information, and uphold the integrity of journalism as the forefront in delivering truth to society.

In media ethics, avoiding slander is a crucial principle. Slander refers to the dissemination of false or untrue information that can harm or tarnish the reputation of individuals or groups. To uphold the integrity and public trust in the media, here are some important concepts in avoiding slander:

Source verification: Before publishing news or information, it is important to conduct thorough verification of the sources used. Ensure that the information comes from reliable sources and has been accurately verified (Nurlatifah & Irwansyah, 2019).

Maintain balance and objectivity: As media professionals, it is important to maintain balance and objectivity in reporting the news. Avoid tendencies to favor or worsen a situation by presenting biased or harmful information about one party (Wall, 2015).

Fact-check carefully: Before publishing any information, carefully fact-check the details. Verify the information received by conducting additional research and digging deeper. Avoid spreading poorly verified information.

Transparency about sources and interests: If there are conflicts of interest or involvement of certain parties in a news story, it is important to be transparent about it. Inform readers or viewers about the sources of information, potential interests involved, or relationships that may influence the reporting.

Avoid sensationalism: Sensationalism can trigger the spread of inaccurate or questionable information. Avoid using excessive or exaggerated headlines or statements aimed at grabbing attention without considering accuracy (Susilo et al., 2019).

Admit mistakes honestly: If mistakes occur, acknowledge and correct them promptly. Maintain journalistic quality by admitting mistakes and rectifying them in a transparent and honest manner.

Avoid spreading unconfirmed rumors: As media professionals, it is important to refrain from spreading unconfirmed information or relying solely on rumors. Make sure to verify every piece of information before sharing it with the public (Latif & Sos, 2022).

In the era of social media and fast-paced news, understanding and adhering to these principles can help avoid slander and ensure the sustainability of media integrity. Prioritizing accuracy, balance, and honesty in reporting is key to addressing these challenges.

The Importance of Avoiding Slander

The findings of this study reveal that in the context of Islam, avoiding slander (fitnah) is an important aspect of ethical communication that should be upheld. Slander is considered a harmful and contradictory action to Islamic values, which prioritize truth, justice, and purity of heart. In the Quran, Allah SWT emphasizes the importance of speaking with good and honest words and warns Muslims to stay away from slander.

This research has found that the phenomenon of slander has become increasingly concerning in modern communication, especially through social media and digital platforms. False information can easily spread and tarnish the reputation of individuals or groups, resulting in serious harm. Slander in online communication is often driven by sensationalism, political motives, or commercial interests, highlighting the complexity of this issue and the need to apply good communication ethics in the digital world.

The Islamic perspective on slander emphasizes the importance of avoiding the spread of false information, defamation, and causing disturbance in society. Islam teaches to verify the truth of information before spreading it, to combat gossip, and to speak with good and beneficial words. In the context of Islamic communication ethics, there are principles that must be firmly upheld, such as honesty, justice, truthfulness, and compassion.

The implementation of good Islamic communication ethics can have positive impacts on individuals and society. By avoiding slander, harmonious social relationships can be maintained, public trust in media and communicators can increase, and conflicts caused by false information can be reduced. Muslim communities need to make communication ethics an integral part of everyday life, both in verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as in the use of social media and digital technology.

This discussion also highlights the importance of education and awareness of communication ethics in Muslim society. Education that teaches Islamic values, including

communication ethics, needs to be strengthened so that individuals have a good understanding of the importance of avoiding slander and spreading accurate information.

However, this research has several limitations. The qualitative method used may have limitations in generalizing the findings to the entire Muslim community. Additionally, the focus of this research is limited to the examination of Islamic communication ethics and avoiding slander, while there are still many other aspects of communication ethics that need further investigation.

Overall, this research makes an important contribution to understanding communication ethics in the context of Islam and the importance of avoiding slander. The implications of this research are the need for the application of Islamic communication ethics principles in daily life, both in verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as in social media and the digital world. Thus, Muslim communities can build dignified communication, reduce the spread of false information, and strengthen harmonious relationships in society.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In the context of Islam, avoiding slander (fitnah) is an important aspect of communication ethics. Slander is considered damaging and contradictory to Islamic values that emphasize truth, justice, and purity of heart. In the modern era of communication, particularly through social media and digital platforms, the phenomenon of slander has become increasingly alarming. False information can easily spread and tarnish the reputation of individuals or groups, resulting in serious harm. Therefore, the application of good communication ethics within the context of Islam is highly necessary.

Suggestion

The Muslim community. Should internalize the principles of Islamic communication ethics in their daily lives, both in verbal and nonverbal communication. Upholding integrity, honesty, and justice in communication will help prevent slander (fitnah). Education on Islamic values, including communication ethics, needs to be strengthened. Formal and informal education should emphasize the importance of avoiding slander, verifying information, and speaking with good and beneficial words. Media outlets and communicators should adhere to the principles of good communication ethics, such as verifying sources of information, maintaining balance and objectivity, and being transparent about sources and interests. Avoid sensationalism and the dissemination of unverified information. In dealing with the spread of slander on social media, it is important for the Muslim community to be discerning consumers. Verify information before sharing it, avoid

spreading unconfirmed rumors, and use social media wisely. The role of governments, media institutions, and civil society organizations is also crucial in promoting communication ethics and combating slander. Cooperation between various parties is needed to create a healthy and responsible communication environment. By applying good Islamic communication ethics, the Muslim community can build harmonious social relationships, increase public trust in the media, and reduce conflicts caused by false information. It is important to prioritize truth, justice, and compassion in communication so that society can effectively address the challenges of slander.

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