

Legitimate Strategies for Countering Rumors: A Subjective Exploration of Quranic and Prophetic Guidance

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Abstract

This study detects the Islamic strategies derived from the Quran and the Sunnah be employed to enhance intellectual awareness and confront digital rumors. It also analyzes the role of Saudi Arabia in combating rumors. The study used eclectic methods to achieve the research aim. It attains descriptive analytical to analyze concepts related to strategies, intellectual awareness, and digital rumors. It also followed the deductive approach to spots to strategies derive from the Quran and the Sunnah to confront digital rumors. It also used applied techniques to provide practical means and tools to enhance intellectual awareness and confront digital rumors, including the optimal use of digital tools to guide individuals and communities toward responsible media behavior. The study found that the Quran and Sunnah provide strategies to safeguard society from malicious rumors. It emphasizes the need to learn and teach these principles. The Islamic religion emphasizes adhering to the Muslim community and its leadership to maintain social cohesion. Therefore, causing harm through rumors is unjustified under any circumstances or pretexts. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has undertaken significant initiatives to immunize individuals against rumors. The study recommends addressing intellectual issues to be carried out by specialists in the Quran and Sunnah.

Keywords: *Countering Rumors, Legitimate Strategies, Quran, Saudi Arabia, Sunnah.*

Introduction

In recent decades, the world has witnessed tremendous advancements in digital technology and media. Therefore, digital platforms and social media have emerged as some of the most vital tools for exchanging information and news among individuals and communities. However, with this progress is accompanied with numerous challenges which impacted societal stability and intellectual security. Among the most prominent of these challenges is the spread of digital rumors (Qadim, 2022). The more communication technologies evolve, the more sophisticated and faster that digital rumors have become in their dissemination. Such advancement creates profound effects on social and psychological stability (Sumaili, 2023). These rumors can even threaten the very values and principles upon which societies are built.

Rumors have existed since ancient times. However, the advancement of communication technologies has turned digital rumors into a dangerous tool exploited by certain entities to spread discord, mislead public opinion, and sow the seeds of doubt in the hearts of individuals (Qadim, 2022). Both the Quran and the Sunnah have warned against rumors and the haste in spreading news without verifying its accuracy. Hence, the importance of researching how Quranic teachings and prophetic guidance serve as practical strategies to counter the threat of digital rumors.

The current research provides a comprehensive vision featured by combining the Islamic perspective and modern tools to counter digital rumors. This can be reached by analyzing strategies derived from the Quran and the Sunnah, and exploring how such strategies can be applied in today's digital reality. Intellectual awareness is the first line of defense against rumors. It relies on individuals' ability to analyze and evaluate information methodically, and to avoid being swayed by unverified news (Al-Kawi, 2020). Therefore, Islamic strategies boost this awareness through fostering values such as verification, confirming the accuracy of news, and promoting social responsibility among individuals (Al-Asiri, 2009).

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Furthermore, this research also highlights modern tools that can be utilized to verify news and uncover rumors. It also studies how educational and religious institutions can be evolved to enhance individuals' awareness and guide them toward the optimal use of social media. The niche of this research comes in bridging the gap between Islamic authenticity and technological modernity. It promotes individuals and institutions with integrated framework which participates effectively to counter digital rumors and provide mechanisms to protect society from their harmful effects.

Research Questions

Digital rumors significantly challenge modern societies due to the widespread use of digital and social media platforms that facilitate the circulation of news without verifying its accuracy. This situation urges us thinking about how to utilize Islamic teachings to promote effective strategies for countering rumors and promoting intellectual awareness among individuals and society. Therefore, the central problem can be framed in the following question:

How can Islamic strategies derived from the Quran and the Sunnah be employed to enhance intellectual awareness and confront digital rumors?

Some questions emerged from the main one:

How can the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah guide in confronting rumors and boosting ethical values?

What are the digital tools and means that can be effectively utilized to combat digital rumors?

How can educational and religious institutions contribute to enhancing intellectual awareness among individuals to face contemporary challenges?

What are the Saudi initiatives to combat rumors?

Previous Studies

There are several studies that have addressed digital rumors, highlighting their effects and mechanisms of dissemination in the digital space. To our knowledge, this topic has not been previously explored or presented in the manner which aims to establish legal strategies to combat digital rumors. Al-Dhubiyani (2023) analyzed the extent to which social media and instant messaging applications like WhatsApp influence the sharing and dissemination of news and opinions in Saudi society. It also highlighted the importance of raising awareness about the dangers of digital rumors and enhancing awareness of methods for verifying news before sharing it. Duaak et al. (2018) explored the impact of electronic rumors on public opinion. It examined the extent to which social media platforms disseminate rumors, by highlighting the most significant social media sites that contributing to rumor spread. Furthermore, Abd al-Aal (2020) identified the communication strategies used on social media to limit the spread of rumors. It also tried to monitor the trends and topics of rumors on Facebook.

Digital rumors are explored in numerous studies. They generally observed a survey method of a sample from the community or one of the social media platforms. These are considered part of field descriptive studies that rely on questionnaires and content analysis. However, they did not cover all aspects of the topic, and what we found were fragments related to some discussions of this research.

Addressing digital rumors requires comprehensive legitimate strategies based on ethical values and effective communication. Therefore, it is essential to promote moral values and collaborate with various entities. Increasing individuals' awareness as well as educating them on the impact of such rumors, we can reduce their impact and maintain community stability. Additionally, our contribution investigates digital rumors in light of intellectual and legitimate contexts. It also utilizes religious teachings to develop effective strategies

for confronting digital rumors and enhancing intellectual awareness among individuals and the community. These focuses are what make our study significant.

Methods and Procedures

Eclectic methods are used in this study. Firstly, the descriptive analytical paradigm was used to analyze concepts related to strategies, intellectual awareness, and digital rumors. This research paradigm provides a comprehensive description of these concepts within the intellectual and administrative context. The deductive approach was also adopted to derive strategies from the Quran and the Sunnah to confront digital rumors. This approach examines how to practically employ the suggested strategies to enhance intellectual awareness in modern societies. Applied techniques were used to provide practical means and tools to enhance intellectual awareness and confront digital rumors, including the optimal use of digital tools to guide individuals and communities toward responsible media behavior.

This study begins by a conceptual background demonstrating the concept of strategies and digital rumors. It also explores the types and importance of strategies in intellectual and legislative contexts. It defines digital rumors, evaluating the concept of digital rumors in the digital age and their importance. It also shows the characteristics of digital rumors and their negative impact on individuals and societies. The second section, explains the Islamic strategies for combating digital rumors including verification of news, promoting moral values as a means of combating digital rumors and ends by social deterrence through Quranic values. Enhancing intellectual awareness to combat digital rumors is discussed in section three. It begins by demonstrating the role of educational and religious institutions, digital tools for combating digital rumors and ends by pointing out the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in combating digital rumors. The study ends by conclusion showing the key findings and recommendations

Conceptual Background

Strategies

Strategy is one of the military terms that has been borrowed and adapted in usage. It refers to the aims and general techniques for achieving a specific purpose. It is often accompanied by another term, "tactics," which refers to operations or steps necessary to achieve the strategies, i.e., the objectives (Abu Amasha, 2015). Chandler (1962) is considered one of the earliest scholars who defined strategy as the determination of long-term goals and objectives, the selection of courses of action, and the allocation of resources necessary to achieve these goals.

The term strategy was then used in psychology and education to refer to planning for the general techniques that guide human thoughts and the types of an activity while engaging in mental processes such as attention and memory (Abu Amasha, 2015). A strategy may also mean the general planning for relatively broad objectives, i.e., a comprehensive plan based on three pillars: skillful planning, implementation, and evaluation (Bryson, 2018). In the 20th century, this term transitioned from the leaders' minds to being circulated and studied in academic research centers. These academics began documenting this term and transferring it to political science, administration, and education (Al-Samir, 2007). These definitions look at strategy a mental effort and a "thinking process" to develop appropriate plans to achieve long-term goals. Therefore, strategy transcends the meaning of being just a plan to take on a broader and more comprehensive meaning that encompasses the concept of a plan as well as the concept of real action and practical work to achieve long-term goals (Al-Asiri, 2009).

Types of Strategies

Strategies are pivotal in intellectual and legal. They direct and analyze various issues in systematic ways. The common types of strategies in these contexts are:

Intellectual Contexts

In the intellectual contexts, there are realistic, analytical, mediatory, creative and critical strategies. Realistic strategy is the first type; it analyzes the current reality and define the required procedures to achieve goals without affecting the surrounding environment. The second type is analytical strategy which relies on determining data and information to identify preferences and future trends. Mediatory strategy is a third type which aims to attain a balance between immediate goals and long-term objectives to achieve equilibrium. Furthermore, the fourth type of strategies implemented in intellectual setting is creative strategy. It focuses on providing creative solutions to problems through critical thinking and renewal. Finally, is the critical strategy which involves critically examining concepts and theories to discover pros and cons and analyze issues (Algalibi, 2018).

Legal Contexts

This type of strategies focuses on adherence to values and legal principles to achieve goals in ways that align with recognized laws and ethics (Al-Asiri, 2009). Among the most important legal strategies for dealing with rumors and mitigating their negative impact. These strategies help build an aware community capable of resisting the influence of rumors and maintaining social cohesion, are the following:

Awareness and Education: this strategy involves raising awareness about the dangers of rumors and their negative effects. It also educates people on the necessity of verifying information before sharing it.

Transparency and Clarity: The Prophet Muhammad PBUH exemplified this in his interactions with people by providing accurate and truthful information. This helped build strong trust between him and his companions, making them less susceptible to believing rumors.

Verification of Source: Encouraging individuals to depend on reliable and well-known sources to authenticate the precision of information before believing or sharing it. Allah Almighty said: "O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with a report, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance" (Quran, 49:6).

Transparency and Clarity: The Prophet Muhammad PBUH exemplified this strategy in his interactions with people. He had provided accurate and truthful information which helped build a strong trust between him and his companions, making them less susceptible to believing rumors.

Enhancing Critical Thinking: The Prophet Muhammad PBUH encouraged utilizing reasoning and critical thinking in authenticating news and rumors before reaching conclusions, rather than blindly accepting them.

Legal Measures: Implementing regulations that criminalize disseminating rumors and false news, and imposing penalties on those found guilty of spreading them.

Providing Evidence: The Prophet Muhammad PBUH used to refute rumors by presenting evidence and proof, thereby cutting off the path for their propagators and clearing any confusion.

Thinking highly: A Muslim should have a good opinion of others and not assume the worst based on unconfirmed rumors.

Avoiding Suspect Situations: Avoiding places and situations that may provoke doubts and rumors.

Importance Strategies in Intellectual and Legal Contexts

The strategies play a pivotal role in intellectual and legal contexts; they serve as vital tools for analyzing and understanding diverse issues in a systematic and comprehensive manner. Intellectual strategies help analyze topics in depth and understand various contexts, leading to more accurate conclusions. They also contribute

to organizing ideas and identifying relationships between different concepts. They encourage critical thinking and evaluating information from multiple perspectives (Al-Ghalibi, 2018). Legal strategies help derive rulings precisely, ensuring their alignment with religious texts and legal objectives. They enable applying Sharia in daily life in ways that align with modern changes and circumstances. Strategies also help focus on the higher goals of Sharia, such as achieving justice and preserving rights. They also encourage *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) in new and emerging issues, contributing to the provision of legal solutions for contemporary problems.

Rumors

Rumors is considered a multifaceted concept due to its various uses and the interconnection of its components across different fields of knowledge, including media, social psychology, political science, and even philosophy. They are used to refer to Prophetic hadiths and narrations which are transmitted without verifying their authenticity, and often new details are added during their transmission (Hajab, 2004). They also promote fabricated or exaggerated news where a small portion of truth or is deliberately distorted, aiming to achieve a psychological or social impact, or to serve political or economic agendas (Tehami, 1982). Rumors are procedurally defined as the representation of a communicative discourse of uncertain source or credibility, aimed at shaping or influencing collective awareness through the dissemination of unreliable or false information within a specific time context.

Dimensions of Rumors

Rumors covers several dimensions including cognitive, psychological, social, political and media dimensions. The first is cognitive dimension which is closely connected with issues of knowledge, "truth" and "falsehood" in the public sphere. Rumors create a state of "cognitive fog" that makes the recipient unable to distinguish between what is real and what is illusory. Psychological dimension, the second, is the mixing of anxiety feelings, fear, and curiosity among individuals, rumors become an effective tool for psychological influence on human groups. Rumors are also spread in societies. Therefore, trust in official sources is weakened or where transparent communication channels are absent, making rumors a recurring social phenomenon in contexts of crises or wars. Rumors are adopted as a strategic to direct public opinion, either by misleading individuals or creating an environment of doubt and confusion to achieve specific political interests. Finally, rumors have become more complex and spread more rapidly due to the ease of information dissemination through social media, leading to difficulties in combating them (Sheikh, 2019). Rumors are used to achieve multiple objectives, including:

Instigating societies by increasing the spread of sensational and false news to create an atmosphere of chaos and instability.

Deceiving societies by circulating misleading to influence the decisions of individuals or groups.

Stirring negative emotions to psychologically mobilizing individuals and making them responsive to control and direction.

Rumors destroy societies by distorting facts and misrepresenting events with the aim of harming security and stability (Ghalem & Belabbas, 2015).

Rumors extend across a wide spectrum of contents, including: political rumors which aimed at influencing public opinion or confusing political decisions. Economic rumors which are used to disrupt markets or impact trust in currencies and financial institutions. Religious rumors which stir doctrinal issues to create division or direct religious groups and social rumors which focus on human relationships and moral issues to fuel conflicts (Al-Madani, 2017). To sum up, rumors can be procedurally defined as a complex social-cognitive phenomenon that combines elements of deception, psychological influence, and social guidance.

Evolution of Rumors in the Digital Age and Their Methods

Rumors are an ancient human which have evolved from simple oral communication to complex tools. They reached their peak in the digital age due to their fast spread and great influential. Today, rumors exploit social media platforms to shape public opinion, raising questions about their relationship with knowledge and their impact on collective awareness. These issues can be addressed by understanding these developments and their tools:

Rumors are Renewed Historical Legacy

Rumors and fake news are ancient human practices intertwined with the very existence of humanity. Over the ages, rumors have evolved from a mere oral tool used within limited communities to a complex phenomenon intertwining human psychology with social, political, and media dimensions. Throughout history, rumors have played contradictory roles. On one hand, they served as a tool for conveying information and confronting ambiguity; on the other hand, they acted as a means of domination and deception. In the modern era, rumors have become more widespread, faster in their impact, and more complex in their methods and objectives (Abdel Aleem, 2019).

Transformations of Rumors from Oral Tradition to Digitization

The historical evolution of rumors passed by three main stages, oral rumors, traditional media rumors and digital rumors each with its characteristics, objectives, and means. In primitive societies, rumors were transmitted orally, which made them limited in scope and connected to narrow social circles. Due to the slow spread and limited circulation of these rumors made them less dangerous compared to later stages. Rumors then transmitted to using traditional media. Traditional media rumors shape the second stage of rumors' development. They include print journalism, radio, and television, rumors evolved to become more impactful and organized. At this stage, rumors were transformed into a phenomenon and carefully designed to achieve specific objectives, leveraging the characteristics of media in terms of wide reach and rapid accessibility. In the digital age, rumors have undergone a qualitative leap of spread and impact. Their creation is no longer exclusive to media or political institutions; using social media platforms, individuals can now easily craft and disseminate rumors. The interactive nature of social media has transformed digital rumors into a disruptive force challenging social and political systems (Al-Hammash, 2008).

Philosophical Dimensions of Digital Rumors

In the digital age, rumors cannot be understood in isolation from the philosophical dimensions associated with them. Digital rumors reflect a broader crisis in modern societies related to the "truth of knowledge" and the "authority of discourse". The most prominent dimensions are: truth and falsehood, power and knowledge and ethics and responsibility. Digital rumors embody the conflict between truth and illusion. Individuals face a crisis of discernment resulted from the abundance of information and the multiplicity of its sources. This poses philosophical queries about the nature of truth and how it is perceived. The second dimension of digital rumors is power and knowledge. The dissemination of knowledge in digital era has become accessible. This has shifted the power from elites to the masses which is featured by epistemic chaos. The third dimension of digital rumors is ethics and responsibility. Therefore, the spread of rumors raises questions such as, "how should individuals take responsibility for sharing rumors?" And "how can the digital community establish an ethical standard for verifying information? (Mahmoud, 2021).

Techniques of Digital Rumors

Digital rumors do not circulate randomly; they depend on precise techniques aimed at influencing the collective mind.

The content of the rumor is intentionally designed to manipulate the collective mind, using a mix of partial truths and misleading information to sow doubt.

Rumors exploit individuals' tendencies to believe information that aligns with their beliefs, thereby reinforcing societal divisions and fueling sectarian and political conflicts.

Rumors manipulate with content such as altering images, editing video clips, or fabricating information to create an alternate reality that confuses the recipient.

Digital rumors mock and diminish the significance of events or figures which encourage individual to spread rumors without scrutiny.

Digital rumors misleadingly associate sensational headlines that do not reflect the content of the news, aiming to attract attention or achieve commercial goals (Saleh et al., 2021).

Characteristics of Digital Rumors

Digital rumors are characterized by their rapid transmission from the source to the recipient, transcending geographical and linguistic boundaries. Their impact relies on its quality and relevance to global events. The use of audio and visual media adds an element of appeal, making the audience more likely to engage with it. They are modifiable and adaptable. Thus, modern technologies allow rumors to be reshaped to suit different objectives including modifying visual and audio content. Technology allows adding or removing parts of the rumor to make it appear more credible to the audience. Furthermore, digital rumors are based on studying the tendencies and interests of societies, making them adaptable to the social and cultural contexts of the target audience. Their spread approach through various tools such as narratives, news, cartoons, jokes, and even edited videos, broadening their scope of influence. Rumors are associated with ambiguous and unreliable sources. They also tied with specific circumstances and partial truth (Al-Sharif, 2015).

Negative Effects of Digital Rumors

Rumors have many negative effects on societies. They create chaos and instability, as seen in the story of the assassination of Uthman ibn Affan or the incident of Al-Ifk, where they were used to provoke division and tension. Rumors also contribute to spreading despair and weakening morale, as happened with the rumor of the Prophet Muhammad's PBUH death during the Battle of Uhud. They achieve strategic gains, such as the actions of Naim ibn Masud during the Battle of the Trench or Al-Hajjaj ibn Ilat Al-Sulami in securing Muslim funds. Rumors fuel feelings of fear and resentment, weakening social relationships and fostering enmity between different groups, exploiting the desires and suppressed hopes of the masses, such as the rumor of Quraysh's conversion to Islam, which prompted some migrants to Abyssinia to return. They deepen sectarian and ideological divisions within societies, leading to conflict and extremism causing feelings of anger, depression, and anxiety among individuals, affecting their mental health and social relationships (Alawi, 2019).

The Impact of Digital Rumors on Collective Consciousness

Digital rumors can reshape collective consciousness. They are used as a technique to control and attitudes behaviors. Their ability to evoke collective emotions (such as fear, anger, and hope) makes them effective to achieve various objectives. This necessitates developing mechanisms to combat them, based on promoting critical thinking and increasing individuals' awareness of the epistemic risks they pose. Therefore, rumors in the digital age are represent an ethical, epistemic, and social challenge. They surpassed being merely false information to be a reflection of significant shifts in the course of knowledge and the authority of discourse. Studying them requires exploring how to activate individual and collective responsibility in confronting them and promoting a culture of verification and transparency (Qadim, 2022).

Islamic Strategies to Combating Digital Rumor

Muslims derive their Islamic ethics from the texts of pure revelation. These sacred texts have endowed their followers with a firm foundation that remains unshaken by the passage of time or changing circumstances,

as they originate from the All-Wise, All-Aware. Allah says, "Does He who created not know, while He is the Subtle, the Acquainted?" (Quran 67:14). The Sharia texts do not merely offer temporary solutions to moral problems. They operate through established sequential steps, though. Each step complements and reinforces the others, effectively eliminating potential causes of conflict and disagreement before they even arise. This preemptive approach spares Muslim society from the precursors of discord and division, as evidenced by Quranic texts: "O you who have believed, do not follow the footsteps of Satan. And whoever follows the footsteps of Satan - indeed, he enjoins immorality and wrongdoing. And if not for the favor of Allah upon you and His mercy, none of you would have been pure, ever, but Allah purifies whom He wills, and Allah is Hearing and Knowing." (Quran 24:21).

The Quran periodically reminds humanity of their shared primordial origin and inherent brotherhood, "O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women" (Quran, 4: 1). The call to love and benevolence encompasses all creation: Allah says "There is no creature on earth nor bird flying with its wings except that they are communities like you. We have not neglected in the Register a thing. Then unto their Lord they will be gathered" (Quran, 6: 38). As affirmed in the Hadith: "In every living being there is reward." (Sahih al-Bukhari 73/38). This study shows how Islam provides decisive solutions to prevent rumors from arising in the first place. It prohibits gossip, slander, insults, curses, accusations, suspicion, obscene language, and shamelessness. Allah says: "Allah does not like the public mention of evil except by one who has been wronged." (Quran 4:148). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "The one who curses others will not be a witness or an intercessor on the Day of Judgment." (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 17/43). A Muslim is one from whom people are safe, as the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: 'A Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe, and a migrant is one who migrates from what Allah has forbidden (Sahih al-Bukhari 8/102).' There are other texts that reinforce noble values in Muslims, such as uprightness, unity, and obedience to those in authority. Allah says: 'O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.' (Quran 4:59).

Verifying News

Verifying news is one of the great moral principles that Allah, and his Messenger, emphasized because verifying news safeguards lives, protects bloodshed, preserves rights and obligations, and prevents the roots of strife and corruption. Allah says: "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." (Quran, 49:6). Allah likens news to the arrival of a traveler, as if warning against the harm that the bearer of news might bring. This serves as a reminder to the listener to handle rumors in the best manner, as if the Quranic verse is saying: If you see someone spreading rumors without verification, stop them. In other words, it is unthinkable that you would do such a thing. The phrase "lest you harm" means to avoid harming "a people out of ignorance." Furthermore, this verse underscores the importance of verifying information before acting upon it. Yet acting on unverified news can lead to unintended harm and regret. Allah calls for caution, responsibility, and ethical conduct in dealing with information, ensuring that justice and truth prevail in society.

A Muslim is obligated to verify the news they convey to avoid propagating falsehood. The Prophet Muhammad, PBUH, said: "It is enough for a person to be considered a liar if they narrate everything they hear." (Sahih Muslim, 1/10). whatever is heard should not be spoken, nor is everything known suitable for dissemination, even if it is true. Allah says: "And when there comes to them a matter of 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." (Quran, 4:83). Alsaedi (2005) in his interpretation of this verse, explains that this is a form of discipline from Allah to His servants for their inappropriate behavior. He emphasizes that when matters of importance or public interest arise—whether related to security, the joy of the believers, or fear that may bring harm—they should not rush to spread such news. Instead, they should refer it to the Messenger (or, in his absence, to those in authority) who possess sound judgment, knowledge, sincerity, wisdom, and the ability to discern

what is beneficial and what is harmful. If those in authority see that disseminating the news serves a greater good, such as uplifting the believers, bringing them joy, or protecting them from their enemies, they may choose to share it. However, if they determine that the harm outweighs the benefit, they will refrain from spreading it. This is why Allah says: "Then those who can draw correct conclusions from it would have known about it," (Quran, 4:83). Yet, those scholars would deduce the best course of action through their sound reasoning, knowledge, and wisdom.

Steadfastness is evident in prophetic morality. For example, Ma'iz bin Malik came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and said, 'Purify me, O Messenger of Allah.' The Prophet replied, 'Woe to you! Go back, ask Allah for forgiveness, and repent to Him.' Ma'iz returned, but then came back again, repeating his request. The Prophet Muhammad told him the same thing, until the fourth time. Then the Prophet asked, 'What do you want me to purify you from?' Ma'iz replied, 'From adultery.' The Prophet asked, 'Is he mad?' When he was informed that Ma'iz was sane, he asked, 'Did he drink wine?' A man stood up and smelled Ma'iz's breath, but found no smell of wine. The Prophet then asked, 'Did you commit adultery?' Ma'iz replied, 'Yes.' The Prophet ordered him to be stoned (Sahih Muslim, 29/34). Similarly, Prophet Solomon PBUH demonstrated steadfastness when the hoopoe bird went missing. After the hoopoe returned, it brought news of a people who prostrated to other than Allah. Solomon PBUH took his time and did not rush to judgment: "We will see whether you have told the truth or lied. Take this letter of mine and deliver it to them, then withdraw from them and see what they return to." (Quran 27:27-28). We are more in need in our current time than ever of verification and steadfastness. This is due to the rapid development of technology and communication in the world. Rumors and false information have become widespread, especially through biased media outlets. It is essential for individuals to distance themselves from anything that can harm them or others.

Reinforcing Moral Values to Counter Rumors

Among nations, moral values are a fundamental pillar in protecting young people from the danger of rumors. Islamic moral values are distinguished from other by being derived from divine sources, and their rulings do not contradict human nature. Allah states "Righteousness is not that you turn your faces towards the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it" (Quran 2:177). Righteousness encompasses all outward and inward deeds of obedience. The verse indicates that Islam linked all its aspects with a moral bond to achieve its goals. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH said: "There is no faith for one who does not keep his promises, and there is no religion for one who does not fulfill his commitments." (Musnad Ahmad, 19/376). The Islamic creed has a motivates Muslims to comply with the divine revelations it contains. It encourages Muslims to adhere to the community, as Allah says: "And hold fast to the rope of Allah, all of you together, and do not split up." (Quran 3:103). In this surah, we read about the crime of accusing someone of adultery, slandering chaste women, the rules of Mula'annah (a process where a husband accuses his wife of adultery and she denies it) between spouses, and other rulings that collectively form a strong fortress for society, protecting it with a robust barrier from all forms of erosion and decay.

Islam calls for purifying the human soul and cleansing it from its impurities and the blameworthy traits that may be inherent in its nature. This level can only be attained with the grace and guidance of Allah, and after the soul has been disciplined to gain control over it. Allah says: "And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it. And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness. He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who instills it [with corruption]." (Quran 91:7-10). This verse highlights the necessity of purifying one's soul and the consequences of failing to do so. It emphasizes the need for self-refinement and spiritual growth to attain success in this life and the hereafter.

Similarly, Islam encourages Muslims to recite adhkar (remembrances) and awrad (legitimate supplications) that contain invocations which motivate Muslims to increase their good deeds and abandon evil ones. The responsibility of instilling these values lies with those in charge of education and upbringing. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH said: "Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock" (Sunan Abi Dawud, 20/1). The responsibility of combating rumors and eliminating their causes falls on the

shoulders of individuals, families, society, and all institutions without exception, including educational, scientific, religious, cultural, media, and security institutions.

Social Deterrence through Quranic Values

Quranic values are undoubtedly among the most significant factors that prevent the spread of malicious rumors in society. These values consider such rumors to be a form of gossip, which is prohibited and warned against. Allah says: "And do not obey every worthless habitual swearer, and scold, who goes about with slander." (Quran 68:10-11). The gossipier will not enter Paradise, as stated in the Hadith: "The gossipier will not enter Paradise" (Sahih Muslim, 1/101). Moreover, engaging in spreading rumors in society is considered behavior that contradicts Islamic etiquette, as mentioned in the Quranic texts.

These Quranic verses emphasize the importance of refraining from gossip, rumors, and idle talk. Allah says: "And do not spy on each other or backbite. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful." (Quran 49:12). Almighty also says: "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." (Quran 17:36). Allah states: "And when they hear vain talk, they turn away from it and say: "For us are our deeds, and for you are your deeds. Peace be upon you. We seek not the ignorant." (Quran 28:55). Allah affirms: "And when you see those who engage in [offensive] discourse concerning Our verses, then turn away from them until they enter into another conversation. And if Satan should cause you to forget, then do not remain after the reminder with the wrongdoing people" (Quran 6:68). Allah says: "They think to deceive people and do not deceive Allah. And He is with them when they spend the night in discourse that He does not approve. And Allah is encompassing of what they do." (Quran 4:108). All the preceding texts represent values that deter individuals and, by extension, society as a whole.

Enhancing Intellectual Awareness to Combat Digital Rumors

The Role of Educational and Religious Institutions to Counter Digital Rumors

Educational and religious institutions play a vital role in combating the phenomenon of spreading rumors, especially in light of rapid technological advancements and the proliferation of social media.

The Role of Educational Institutions to Counter Digital Rumors

Educational institutions are the first line in combating digital rumors. They prepare the right environment and equip students with knowledge and skills required for upbringing a generation capable of facing the challenges of the information age. Educational institutions are required to incorporate and teach critical thinking skills to their students which help students to distinguish between opinions and facts and determine cognitive biases. They also required to promote scientific research skills to their students by which students can evaluate the accuracy of information. Conducting workshops and seminars are also required to raise the awareness of students against the danger of rumors and helping them on evaluate media contents. Educational institutions are also required to developing faculty members on integrating fact-checking to their teaching lessons. They are required to incorporate with active participation in social life (Ismail, 2020).

The Role of Religious Institutions to Counter Digital Rumors

Religious institutions have a vital role in building cohesive communities and combating rumors. They are directly associated to the ethics and values that govern individual behavior. They raise the awareness of honesty and trustworthiness in the society as well as the importance of authenticating information before sharing them. Such institutions are required to interpret the correct meaning of Quranic verses and hadiths and prevent the spread of news. They are also required to held partnership with educational, media and public institutions to combat rumors. Religious platforms are enquired to warn people against the danger of rumors providing advice on dealing with them. They should train preachers on using digital tools and teach them how to counter rumors (Mohamed, 2020).

Digital Tools in Combating Rumors

In the age of rapidly flowing and accelerating information, digital rumors pose major threat modern societies. They spread at an incredible pace through digital platforms, threatening community security and stability. Some digital tools contribute in displaying facts and combating rumors. Fact-checking tools are the first line of defense against rumors. They examine circulating information, compare it to trustworthy sources, and determine its accuracy (Liu et al., 2023). Numerous websites specialize in fact-checking, such as Snopes, (link unavailable), and fact-checking teams affiliated with major news agencies. Some platforms use chatbots trained to identify rumors and provide accurate information. Some web browsers offer extensions that enable users to verify the accuracy of articles while browsing the internet. Image and video analysis tools also help detect manipulation of images and videos; they can utilize to combat rumors. Reverse image search tools allow users to identify the original source of an image or video, helping to reveal any alterations. Video verification tools utilize artificial intelligence techniques to analyze videos and detect signs of manipulation (Aljalabneh, 2024). While social media platforms play a significant role in spreading rumors, they also provide tools to combat them. Most platforms enable users to report posts suspected of being rumor. Furthermore, platforms integrate fact-checking tools into their interfaces, making it easier for users to access them (Bourouis et al., 2020). Most platforms allow users to report posts that violate their usage policies. Finally, combating rumors requires a collective effort from individuals, institutions, and governments.

Saudi Arabia's efforts in Combating of Digital Rumors

Digital rumors significantly challenge modern societies. In Saudi Arabia, spreading rumors is criminalized and confronted with strict regulations and laws. The Saudi constitution is rooted in the Quran and the Sunnah. Therefore, the Saudi legal system relies on Islamic Sharia to counter rumors. Disseminating or promoting rumors is criminalized under the Saudi Penal System. Rumors fall under the Anti-Cyber Crime Law and all penalties related to combating rumors (cybercrimes) fall under the category of Ta'zir (discretionary punishment) in Islamic jurisprudence (Sumaili, 2023). The Kingdom has implemented several measures to address this issue, guided by the Quranic verse " :O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient person with information, investigate..." (Quran, 49:6). The Kingdom seeks to raise social awareness through integrating strategies and using modern technologies to combat fake news. These efforts contribute to protecting the Saudi society from the negative impacts of this phenomenon. They reflect the Kingdom's commitment to safeguarding society from misinformation and promoting a culture of accurate information. The Kingdom's role in confronting digital rumors has been highlighted through GOV.SA (2025):

The Kingdom has enacted strict legislation and laws to combat rumors and misinformation, imposing penalties on those who spread them. Regulatory bodies have also been established to oversee digital content.

Saudi Arabia has launched awareness campaigns to educate citizens on how to identify and counter rumors. Educational programs and school curricula now include topics addressing rumors and misinformation, equipping future generations with skills to verify information.

Saudi Arabia has partnered with technology companies to monitor content and flag false information.

The Kingdom has strengthened the role of official media in disseminating facts and publishing verified and reliable news, ensuring transparency and accuracy.

The Saudi government supports civil society organizations in their efforts to report rumors and misinformation through dedicated channels, combating rumors, fostering collective responsibility.

Saudi Arabia has established specialized Government Entities and Cybersecurity to counter digital rumors such as Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA) responsible for regulating data governance

and advancing AI technologies and National Cybersecurity Authority (NCA) which focuses on monitoring and securing the digital landscape, preventing cyber threats and misinformation proliferation.

Findings

The study found that the Quran and Sunnah provide qualitative strategies to safeguard society from malicious rumors. It emphasizes the need to learn and teach these principles. The Islamic texts mandate verifying information and cautioning against spreading unverified rumors. Islam strictly forbids spreading rumors, labeling those who do so as "transgressors." The Islamic religion emphasizes adhering to the Muslim community and its leadership to maintain social cohesion. Therefore, causing harm through rumors is unjustified under any circumstances or pretexts. Furthermore, the Kingdom has undertaken significant initiatives to immunize youth against rumors through establishing diverse programs across multiple fields, providing support for scholars and intellectuals and promoting domestic and international services to exhibit Islam's true and moderate essence. The study recommends conduct Quranic research focused on addressing intellectual issues, carried out by specialists in the Quran and Sunnah. It also calls for establishing research chairs in universities dedicated to studying intellectual issues, such as the topic of our current research.

Acknowledgments: The authors are thankful to the Deanship of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research at University of Bisha for supporting this work through the Fast-Track Research Support Program.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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