

Tabayyun in the Digital Age: Islamic Ethical Verification Against Misinformation and Online Deception

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

Tabayyun; misinformation; digital media ethics; online scams; verification; Islamic communication ethics

The expansion of digital media has intensified the spread of misinformation, speculative narratives, and online deception. In this environment, the absence of verification often leads to reputational harm, financial scams, and the rapid spread of misleading information. This paper explores the Islamic principle of *tabayyun*—verification before accepting or disseminating information, as an ethical framework for responsible digital communication. Drawing upon Qur'anic guidance in Surah al-Hujurat (49:6), the study situates *tabayyun* within Islamic communication ethics emphasizing trust (*amanah*), justice (*'adl*), and the protection of human dignity. The discussion examines how digital virality, clickbait culture, and online scams exploit the lack of user verification. While cases such as viral social media controversies illustrate the phenomenon, the paper extends the discussion to broader issues of digital misinformation and deception. It argues that *tabayyun* offers both a moral and practical framework for navigating contemporary information ecosystems by promoting critical verification, ethical restraint, and responsible sharing practices. Ultimately, the study highlights how Islamic ethical principles can contribute to global conversations on digital media responsibility, misinformation management, and the preservation of social trust in networked societies.

1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital media has fundamentally transformed the landscape of communication, enabling instantaneous dissemination of information across global networks. Social media platforms, online news portals, and user-generated content have reshaped how individuals' access, interpret, and circulate information. While these developments have enhanced connectivity and democratized content production, they have simultaneously intensified the proliferation of misinformation, speculative narratives, and digital deception (Castells, 2011; McQuail, 2010).

Existing scholarship has extensively examined misinformation as a technological and sociological phenomenon, often focusing on algorithmic amplification, audience fragmentation, and platform governance (Tufekci, 2015; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). However, much of this literature remains anchored in Western epistemological frameworks, privileging institutional regulation, media literacy, and platform accountability as primary solutions. While these approaches are valuable, they tend to underemphasise the role of individual ethical responsibility in everyday communication practices.

At the same time, studies on digital fraud and online scams highlight how deception operates not merely through false information but through manipulation of trust, emotion, and perceived authority

(Button & Cross, 2017; Lea et al., 2009). This suggests that the crisis of digital communication is not solely informational, but also moral and behavioural in nature.

Despite these insights, there remains limited engagement with non-Western ethical paradigms that foreground moral accountability in communication. This paper addresses this gap by introducing *tabayyun*, a Qur'anic principle of verification as a normative ethical framework for digital communication. Drawing upon Surah al-Hujurat (49:6), *tabayyun* emphasises verification prior to acceptance or dissemination of information in order to prevent harm and injustice.

The study argues that *tabayyun* extends beyond a theological injunction and can be reconceptualised as a form of ethical digital literacy, integrating cognitive verification with moral responsibility. In doing so, the paper contributes to contemporary debates on misinformation by offering a culturally grounded yet globally relevant framework for responsible communication.

Misinformation and Information Disorder

The proliferation of misinformation has emerged as one of the defining challenges of contemporary digital communication. Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) conceptualise this phenomenon through the framework of “information disorder,” which distinguishes between misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information. Misinformation refers to false or misleading information shared without intent to harm, whereas disinformation involves deliberate attempts to deceive. Mal-information, in contrast, involves the strategic use of truthful information to cause harm, often through selective exposure or contextual distortion.

This typology highlights the complexity of misinformation beyond the simplistic notion of “fake news.” In digital environments, the boundaries between these categories are often blurred, particularly as users actively participate in content creation and dissemination. The participatory nature of digital media allows misinformation to spread rapidly through peer-to-peer networks, where trust is often based on social relationships rather than institutional credibility (Jenkins, 2006).

Scholars have also noted that misinformation is not merely a by-product of technological systems but is deeply embedded within broader socio-cultural dynamics. For instance, audience fragmentation and echo chambers contribute to the reinforcement of existing beliefs, making users more susceptible to accepting information that aligns with their prior assumptions (Sunstein, 2017). This phenomenon is further exacerbated by confirmation bias, where individuals selectively engage with information that supports their worldview while disregarding contradictory evidence.

In the Malaysian context, misinformation has manifested in various forms, including political rumours, health-related misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic, and viral social media narratives (Ngadiron et al., 2020; Hanafiah & Wan, 2024). For example, misleading claims about vaccination safety circulated widely on platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook, often presented as personal testimonies or forwarded messages (Resende et al., 2019; Cinelli et al., 2020).

These forms of misinformation gained traction not because of their accuracy, but because of their emotional resonance and perceived authenticity within close social networks, where trust is derived from interpersonal relationships rather than institutional sources (Vosoughi et al., 2018; Boczkowski et al., 2018). Such cases demonstrate how misinformation operates within everyday communication practices, particularly in informal digital environments, highlighting the need for ethical frameworks that address both content and user behaviour.

Digital Media, Virality and Algorithmic Amplification

The spread of misinformation in digital environments cannot be fully understood without examining the structural dynamics of digital platforms. Social media platforms operate within an “attention economy,” where visibility and engagement are prioritised as key indicators of success (Castells, 2011). Algorithms are designed to maximise user interaction, often by promoting content that elicits strong emotional responses such as outrage, fear, or sympathy.

Tufekci (2015) argues that algorithmic systems play a significant role in shaping information exposure by curating personalised content feeds. These systems are not neutral; rather, they are optimised to increase user engagement, which inadvertently amplifies sensational and emotionally charged content. As a result, misinformation that triggers strong reactions is more likely to be shared and circulated widely compared to factual but less engaging information.

This dynamic is evident in the rise of clickbait culture, where headlines are strategically designed to attract attention rather than convey accurate information (Blom & Hansen, 2015). Clickbait frequently relies on exaggeration, ambiguity, curiosity gaps, and emotional appeal to encourage user engagement without prompting critical evaluation of content credibility (Kuiken et al., 2017). In algorithm-driven digital environments, emotionally provocative and sensational content is more likely to generate visibility and engagement, reinforcing the circulation of attention-grabbing headlines over informative reporting (Tufekci, 2015).

In the Malaysian context, such practices are commonly observed in viral social media posts and online news portals, where sensational headlines are often used to generate traffic and user interaction despite questionable informational accuracy (Ngadiron et al., 2020; Kee & Omar, 2020). This demonstrates how the commercial and algorithmic logic of digital media can incentivise engagement-oriented communication practices at the expense of verification and informational integrity.

Moreover, the architecture of digital platforms facilitates rapid information diffusion through features such as “share,” “retweet,” and “forward,” which enable users to circulate content instantly across networked communities (Boyd, 2010; Castells, 2011). On messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, the forwarding function allows messages to be disseminated across multiple groups within seconds, significantly increasing the reach and visibility of unverified information (Resende et al., 2019; Arun, 2022).

These platform affordances prioritise speed, engagement, and circulation, often at the expense of verification and critical evaluation. Research has shown that emotionally engaging or sensational information spreads more rapidly than factual content in digital environments (Vosoughi et al., 2018), while algorithmic systems further amplify content that generates high user interaction (Tufekci, 2015). Consequently, digital communication environments increasingly normalise rapid sharing practices, where immediacy and visibility take precedence over informational accuracy and verification.

Importantly, these structural factors interact with user behaviour, creating a feedback loop that sustains the circulation of misinformation. Digital platforms are designed to maximise visibility and engagement, incentivising users to share content that attracts attention and generates interaction (Van Dijck, 2013; Tufekci, 2015). At the same time, users are often motivated by social validation, visibility, and emotional engagement, contributing to the rapid circulation of sensational or misleading content (Vosoughi et al., 2018; Pennycook et al., 2021).

This dynamic reflects the broader logic of the attention economy, where user attention functions as a form of digital value and highly engaging content is rewarded with increased exposure (Davenport & Beck, 2001). Consequently, the interaction between technological design and human behaviour creates a self-reinforcing cycle that normalises the spread of misinformation. This interplay underscores the need for ethical interventions that move beyond purely technical or regulatory solutions by addressing the moral and behavioural dimensions of digital communication (Couldry, 2012; Floridi, 2013).

Media Ethics and Verification Practices

Media ethics has traditionally emphasised principles such as accuracy, fairness, and accountability in the production and dissemination of information. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) identify verification as a fundamental discipline of journalism, underscoring its role in maintaining public trust and credibility. Similarly, McQuail (2010) highlights the importance of social responsibility in media practices, where communication should serve the public interest and minimize harm.

However, these frameworks were developed primarily within the context of institutional media, where professional journalists functioned as gatekeepers responsible for filtering, verifying, and disseminating information to the public (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). In contemporary digital environments, the gatekeeping function has become increasingly decentralised, with ordinary users assuming roles as content creators, distributors, and commentators within participatory media ecosystems (Jenkins, 2006; Bruns, 2008).

This transformation reflects the broader shift from centralised media systems toward networked communication structures, where information flows rapidly across digital platforms without the same level of editorial oversight or institutional control (Castells, 2011). As a result, traditional media ethics frameworks face significant challenges, since users engaged in information sharing are generally not bound by professional journalistic norms, ethical codes, or formal accountability mechanisms (Singer et al., 2011). Consequently, the decentralisation of communication power necessitates broader ethical frameworks that extend responsibility beyond professional media actors to include everyday digital users.

Existing approaches to media literacy seek to address this issue by equipping individuals with critical thinking skills to evaluate information. Livingstone (2004) emphasises the importance of media literacy in enabling users to access, analyse, and evaluate media content. While these approaches are valuable, they often focus primarily on cognitive competencies, such as identifying misinformation or assessing source credibility.

Critically, existing media literacy frameworks tend to prioritise cognitive competencies such as information access, analysis, and evaluation while overlooking the ethical dimensions of communication, particularly the responsibility associated with sharing information (Livingstone, 2004; Buckingham, 2015). The ability to recognise misinformation does not necessarily translate into ethical behaviour, especially in contexts where emotional responses, social pressures, and participatory dynamics influence decision-making (Vosoughi et al., 2018; Pennycook et al., 2021).

Scholars have increasingly argued that media literacy alone may be insufficient in addressing misinformation if it does not also cultivate ethical awareness and responsible participation within digital environments (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017). This limitation highlights the need for frameworks that integrate both cognitive and moral considerations in addressing misinformation and digital deception. In this regard, ethical communication approaches that emphasise responsibility, accountability, and the consequences of information sharing become increasingly relevant in contemporary digital culture (Couldry, 2012; Floridi, 2013).

While existing frameworks provide valuable tools for analysing misinformation, scholars increasingly argue that media literacy alone is insufficient in addressing the ethical challenges of digital communication. As Buckingham (2015) notes, critical media literacy often emphasises analytical skills without necessarily influencing behavioural change. Similarly, Mihailidis and Viotty (2017) highlight that digital citizenship requires not only critical awareness but also ethical participation in media environments.

This limitation becomes particularly evident in contexts where users are aware of misinformation yet continue to engage in its dissemination due to social pressures, emotional reactions, or perceived benefits such as visibility and engagement (Marwick, 2015; Van Dijck, 2013). Research suggests that users frequently share misinformation not necessarily because they believe it to be accurate, but because they fail to prioritise accuracy during the act of sharing or are motivated by participatory and affective dynamics within digital environments (Pennycook et al., 2021).

In high-engagement digital cultures, emotionally resonant and attention-grabbing content is more likely to be circulated rapidly, reinforcing behavioural patterns that privilege visibility and interaction over verification (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Consequently, there is a growing recognition that addressing misinformation requires a shift from purely cognitive frameworks toward approaches that integrate ethical responsibility and moral reasoning in communication practices (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017; Couldry, 2012).

In this regard, the concept of *tabayyun* offers a significant contribution by bridging the gap between cognitive media literacy and ethical responsibility in digital communication. Conventional media literacy frameworks primarily emphasise the ability to identify, analyse, and evaluate misinformation (Livingstone, 2004; Buckingham, 2015), yet they often under-address the ethical implications associated with the dissemination of information (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017).

In contrast, *tabayyun* foregrounds the moral consequences of communication practices by integrating verification with accountability, responsibility, and harm prevention. This aligns with broader perspectives in media and information ethics that emphasise the importance of ethical participation within digital environments (Couldry, 2012; Floridi, 2013).

The distinction highlights the need for a more holistic approach that combines knowledge verification with moral accountability, particularly in digital environments characterised by rapid information exchange, participatory media culture, and decentralised communication structures (Jenkins, 2006; Castells, 2011). In this sense, *tabayyun* provides a culturally grounded yet globally relevant ethical framework for addressing misinformation and digital deception (Kamali, 2008).

Tabayyun in Islamic Communication Ethics

Qur'anic Foundation on Tabayyun

The concept of *tabayyun* originates from the Qur'anic injunction in Surah al-Hujurat (49:6), which instructs believers to verify information before accepting or acting upon it. The verse emphasises the potential consequences of unverified information, warning that individuals may unintentionally harm others and later regret their actions. This principle reflects a broader ethical orientation within Islam that prioritises truth, justice, and social harmony.

Tabayyun, therefore, is not merely a procedural act of checking information, but a moral obligation grounded in the prevention of harm. It requires individuals to exercise caution, critical thinking, and responsibility in communication, particularly when dealing with information that may affect others.

Beyond its epistemological and ethical dimensions, *tabayyun* can also be understood as a form of communicative discipline that regulates both individual behaviour and collective interaction. In contemporary digital environments, where communication is often instantaneous and unfiltered, the absence of such discipline contributes to the normalisation of misinformation and reactive engagement.

Tabayyun introduces a temporal dimension to communication by encouraging individuals to pause, reflect, and verify before responding. This contrasts sharply with the immediacy-driven logic of digital platforms, where speed is often prioritised over accuracy. In this sense, *tabayyun* challenges the dominant culture of "instant sharing" by promoting deliberative communication practices.

In the Malaysian context, this is particularly relevant in the circulation of viral content on platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, and Facebook. For example, forwarded messages claiming urgent financial threats or health warnings often prompt immediate reactions without verification. The application of *tabayyun* in such situations would require individuals to question the source, verify the information through credible channels, and consider the potential consequences of sharing.

Furthermore, *tabayyun* aligns with broader Islamic principles of social responsibility, where communication is not viewed as a neutral act but as one that carries moral implications. This perspective reinforces the idea that ethical communication is essential for maintaining social harmony (Kamali, 2008) and preventing harm in increasingly interconnected societies.

Tabayyun as Epistemological and Ethical Framework

From an epistemological perspective, *tabayyun* can be understood as a framework for validating knowledge. It emphasises the importance of evidence, credibility, and context in determining the truthfulness of information. This aligns with broader Islamic traditions of knowledge verification, where scholars historically engaged in rigorous methods of authentication, particularly in the transmission of hadith.

However, *tabayyun* extends beyond epistemology into the realm of ethics. It integrates the process of verification with moral considerations, requiring individuals to reflect on the potential consequences of their actions. This dual emphasis distinguishes *tabayyun* from conventional approaches to information verification, which often focus solely on accuracy without addressing ethical implications.

Tabayyun and Core Ethical Values

The principle of *'adl* (justice) emphasises fairness and the avoidance of harm, particularly in relation to false accusations or misleading narratives. The spread of misinformation can lead to reputational damage and social injustice, highlighting the importance of verification in maintaining fairness.

Additionally, *hifz al-'ird* (protection of dignity) reflects the ethical obligation to safeguard the honour and reputation of individuals. In the context of social media, where information can spread rapidly and widely, the failure to verify information can result in significant harm to individuals and communities.

Tabayyun in Contemporary Malaysian Context

The relevance of *tabayyun* is particularly evident in the Malaysian digital landscape, where social media plays a central role in everyday communication. Cases of viral misinformation, including false allegations, scam messages, and manipulated content, highlight the consequences of sharing unverified information.

For instance, financial scams involving fake investment schemes have become increasingly prevalent in Malaysia. Victims are often lured through social media advertisements or WhatsApp messages promising high returns with minimal risk. These messages frequently include fabricated testimonials or impersonate legitimate financial institutions, creating a false sense of credibility. The absence of verification practices allows such scams to proliferate, resulting in significant financial losses.

Similarly, viral social media controversies, including unverified accusations against individuals, demonstrate how misinformation can shape public perception and lead to social harm. In such cases, users often react emotionally and share content without verifying its accuracy, contributing to the viral dissemination of deceptive narratives.

These examples illustrate how *tabayyun* can function as both an ethical and practical framework in contemporary communication. By encouraging individuals to verify information, exercise restraint, and consider the consequences of their actions, *tabayyun* provides a mechanism for mitigating the spread of misinformation and protecting individuals from harm.

2. Method

The study adopts a qualitative conceptual research design, focusing on theoretical analysis and interdisciplinary literature synthesis. Rather than relying on empirical data collection, the research employs a normative-analytical approach to examine how Islamic ethical principles can be applied to contemporary digital communication challenges.

The methodology involves three main components, which are literature analysis, conceptual framework development and illustrative case referencing.

Literature Analysis

The study reviews key literature from:

- Media and communication studies (e.g., misinformation, digital media, media ethics).
- Islamic ethical and legal scholarship.
- Digital communication and scam-related studies.

This allows for the integration of Western communication theories with Islamic ethical frameworks.

Conceptual Framework Development

The concept of *tabayyun* is analysed based on Qur'anic exegesis and Islamic ethical philosophy. It is then reinterpreted within the context of communication ethics to develop a normative framework relevant to digital media environments.

Illustrative Case Referencing

Selected real-world phenomena, such as viral misinformation and online scams, are used as illustrative cases to contextualise the discussion. These cases are not treated as empirical data but as analytical examples that demonstrate the relevance of *tabayyun* in contemporary communication contexts.

This methodological orientation is consistent with conceptual research traditions in communication research, where theoretical development and ethical analysis contribute to knowledge advancement without necessarily relying on primary empirical data. As such, this study aims to generate normative and theoretical insights rather than empirical generalisations.

3. Result and Discussion

The study identifies three interrelated findings that illuminate the relationship between misinformation, digital deception, and ethical communication in contemporary media environments.

First, misinformation and online scams are not isolated anomalies but are structurally embedded within contemporary digital media ecosystems. Platform architectures prioritise engagement metrics such as clicks, shares, watch time, and affective reactions, thereby amplifying content that is sensational rather than accurate. This corroborates scholarship on algorithmic amplification (Tufekci, 2015) and the political economy of attention, where visibility is rewarded irrespective of veracity. In practice, emotionally resonant posts (e.g., alarming health claims or “urgent” financial alerts) tend to outperform verified but less sensational updates. The implication is that misinformation is not merely accidental; it is systemically incentivised by platform logics, normalising the circulation of unverified content.

Second, the findings reveal that the persistence of misinformation is closely linked to the absence of verification practices among users. While media literacy initiatives emphasise critical consumption, they often under-address behavioural tendencies such as immediacy bias, emotional reactivity, and reliance on heuristics (e.g., perceived authority, familiarity, or social proof). As a result, users frequently share content before verification, especially in high-arousal contexts. This supports the view that misinformation is not only a content problem but a behavioural and ethical deficit in digital communication. For instance, phishing messages that mimic bank alerts exploit urgency and authority cues, prompting rapid, unverified responses. The implication is that effective interventions must target user practices and dispositions, not only content accuracy (Lea et al., 2009).

This behavioural dimension is particularly evident in the Malaysian digital context, where messaging platforms such as WhatsApp function as primary channels of information exchange. Unlike public social media platforms, WhatsApp operates within closed and encrypted networks, where information circulates among familiar contacts and is often perceived as trustworthy (Resende et al., 2019; Lim, 2023).

Within these environments, trust is largely derived from interpersonal relationships rather than institutional credibility, as users tend to rely on information shared by family members, friends, or community groups (Boczkowski et al., 2018; Newman et al., 2023). This relational trust reduces the likelihood of critical evaluation, as information received from known sources is less likely to be questioned or verified (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007).

Consequently, misinformation shared within such networks is more easily accepted and disseminated, even in the absence of verification. Studies have shown that users frequently forward messages within trusted networks without critically assessing their accuracy, contributing to the persistence of misinformation in private communication channels (Guess et al., 2019). This highlights how the structural and social dynamics of messaging platforms reinforce behavioural tendencies that prioritise trust and immediacy over verification, thereby increasing the vulnerability of users to misinformation.

For instance, viral messages related to financial scams or health misinformation are frequently circulated through messaging platforms with phrases such as “forwarded as received” or “please share urgently,” which create a sense of immediacy and social obligation (Arun, 2022; Resende et al., 2019). These cues function as persuasive triggers, drawing on principles of urgency, authority, and social proof that encourage compliance and reduce critical evaluation (Cialdini, 2009).

In high-arousal contexts, such emotionally charged and time-sensitive messages are more likely to be shared rapidly, often without verification (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Empirical research further suggests that users frequently share information without reflecting on its accuracy, particularly when

cognitive attention is limited or when content aligns with emotional responses (Pennycook et al., 2021).

As a result, these communicative patterns reinforce the behavioural dynamics that sustain misinformation within digital networks. This suggests the importance of integrating ethical frameworks such as *tabayyun* into everyday communication practices, particularly in informal digital spaces where traditional media gatekeeping mechanisms are absent (Jenkins, 2006).

Third, the analysis demonstrates that *tabayyun* offers a comprehensive framework that addresses both the epistemic and ethical dimensions of communication. Unlike conventional media literacy models, which focus primarily on identifying false information (Livingstone, 2004), *tabayyun* introduces an additional layer of moral accountability, emphasising the consequences of sharing unverified information. It requires verification (checking sources and evidence), restraint (withholding dissemination when uncertain), and responsibility (anticipating harm). This positions *tabayyun* as a normative corrective to existing frameworks that privilege cognition over ethics. The implication is that integrating *tabayyun* can recalibrate digital practices from speed-driven sharing toward accountable communication.

From a broader analytical perspective, these findings suggest that current approaches to combating misinformation such as regulatory measures and technological interventions, while necessary, remain insufficient without addressing the ethical dispositions of users. Existing research highlights that platform-based solutions, including content moderation and algorithmic filtering, face inherent limitations in fully controlling the spread of misinformation across complex digital ecosystems (Gillespie, 2018; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

Moreover, studies increasingly demonstrate that misinformation persists not only due to structural factors but also because of user behaviour, particularly the lack of critical reflection and attention during information sharing (Pennycook & Rand, 2019). This underscores the need to move beyond purely technical or regulatory approaches toward frameworks that engage with the ethical dimensions of communication.

In this regard, *tabayyun* fills a critical gap by embedding verification within a moral framework grounded in accountability, justice (*'adl*), trust (*amanah*), and the protection of dignity (*hifz al-'ird*). This aligns with broader perspectives in media and information ethics, which emphasise the importance of individual responsibility in shaping communication practices within digital environments (Couldry, 2012; Floridi, 2013).

Furthermore, the discussion of online scams highlights how the absence of *tabayyun* creates systemic vulnerabilities within digital communication. Scammers exploit urgency cues, authority signals, and reward anticipation to bypass deliberation, demonstrating that deception operates through psychological manipulation as much as through false information (Lea et al., 2009; Button & Cross, 2017). This reinforces the argument that verification must be understood not only as a technical skill but as an ethical discipline combining cognitive vigilance and moral restraint.

Taken together, the findings reposition *tabayyun* as a holistic framework for ethical digital communication, bridging the gap between media literacy and moral responsibility. While existing media literacy frameworks emphasise cognitive skills in evaluating information (Livingstone, 2004), scholars have increasingly noted their limitations in fostering ethical engagement and responsible communication practices (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017).

By integrating verification with moral accountability, *tabayyun* extends beyond technical competencies and aligns with broader perspectives in media and information ethics that emphasise individual responsibility in shaping communication practices (Couldry, 2012; Floridi, 2013).

This reconceptualisation contributes to contemporary debates on misinformation and digital deception by introducing a non-Western ethical framework into communication scholarship, highlighting the relevance of Islamic ethical thought in addressing global digital challenges (Couldry & Hepp, 2018; Kamali, 2008).

This study contributes to communication and media scholarship in three significant ways. First, it advances a theoretical contribution by introducing *tabayyun* as a normative ethical framework

within digital communication, thereby extending media ethics discourse beyond predominantly Western paradigms. Second, it offers a conceptual contribution by reconceptualising *tabayyun* as a form of ethical digital literacy that integrates verification practices with moral responsibility. Third, it provides an interdisciplinary contribution by bridging Islamic ethical philosophy with contemporary communication theory, demonstrating the relevance of religious ethical frameworks in addressing modern challenges such as misinformation and online scams.

4. Conclusion

This study adopts a conceptual and normative approach, which, while valuable for theoretical development, does not involve empirical data collection. As such, the arguments presented are grounded in literature synthesis and analytical interpretation rather than empirical validation.

Future research may extend this study through empirical investigation, including content analysis of misinformation on social media platforms, surveys examining users' verification practices, and interviews with media practitioners or victims of digital scams. Such approaches would provide deeper insight into how verification behaviours are enacted in real-world contexts.

In addition, comparative studies could explore how *tabayyun* aligns with or differs from other ethical frameworks in global communication contexts. This would further enhance the applicability of Islamic ethical principles in addressing contemporary media challenges and contribute to broader cross-cultural discussions in communication ethics distinctiveness.

In conclusion, the digital age has intensified longstanding challenges associated with misinformation and deception, while introducing new vulnerabilities through platform-mediated communication. The prevalence of online scams and viral misinformation underscores the limitations of existing verification practices, particularly in environments where speed, visibility, and emotional engagement are prioritised over accuracy.

This paper has argued that *tabayyun* provides a comprehensive ethical framework for addressing these challenges. By foregrounding verification as both a moral obligation and a communicative practice, *tabayyun* reorients digital communication toward accountability, justice, and social responsibility. Importantly, its integration into contemporary digital literacy extends beyond technical competencies, embedding ethical awareness into everyday communication practices.

Beyond its theoretical contribution, the application of *tabayyun* has important practical implications for digital communication practices. Educational institutions, media organisations, and policymakers can incorporate *tabayyun* principles into digital literacy programmes to promote responsible information sharing. By emphasising verification, ethical restraint, and accountability, such initiatives can help cultivate a culture of responsible communication among digital users.

In addition, the integration of *tabayyun* into media discourse can contribute to strengthening public trust in information systems. As misinformation continues to challenge the credibility of digital platforms, ethical frameworks that emphasise responsibility and verification become increasingly relevant. This is particularly important in multicultural and multi-religious societies such as Malaysia, where communication practices have significant social implications.

Ultimately, in an environment defined by informational abundance and epistemic uncertainty, verification is no longer merely a professional standard—it is a moral responsibility for all participants in the digital communication ecosystem. As such, incorporating *tabayyun* into digital communication practices offers a meaningful pathway toward strengthening ethical engagement, mitigating misinformation, and protecting society from online deception.

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