

The Qur'ānic Methodology of Information Verification and Countering Fake News in the Digital Age: A Thematic and Analytical Study

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Abstract

The advent of the digital age and the proliferation of social media platforms have fundamentally democratized information access; however, this technological shift has simultaneously precipitated a global epistemic crisis characterized by the rapid dissemination of fake news, disinformation, and AI-generated fabrications. The consequences of this information disorder are profound, leading to social polarization, religious sectarianism, political instability, and character assassination. While contemporary media studies focus predominantly on secular fact-checking mechanisms and algorithms, the Islamic epistemological tradition offers a robust, ethically grounded, and comprehensive methodology for information verification. This qualitative, thematic, and analytical study addresses the critical research gap in interdisciplinary Islamic media studies by conceptualizing the Qur'ānic methodology of information verification. By examining the Qur'ānic principles of Tathabbut (verification), Tabayyun (clarification), 'Adālah (justice/source integrity), and Amānah (trustworthiness) – particularly drawn from Sūrah Al-Hujurāt, Sūrah An-Nūr, and Sūrah Al-Isrā' – the research synthesizes classical exegesis with modern Information Disorder frameworks. The original contribution of this study is the proposal of the "Qur'ānic Information Verification Framework (QIVF)," a structured operational model designed to counter digital misinformation. The findings suggest that classical Islamic mechanisms, such as Sanad (chain of transmission) and Matn (textual) criticism, are highly applicable to modern digital provenance and content analysis. The paper concludes that integrating the QIVF into national digital literacy policies and educational curricula is imperative for fostering ethical digital citizenship and mitigating the socio-political impacts of fake news in contemporary Muslim societies, particularly in Pakistan.

Keywords: Information Verification, Fake News, Qur'ānic Methodology, Disinformation, Digital Age, QIVF, Islamic Communication Ethics.

Introduction

Throughout the evolutionary journey of human civilization, the transmission and communication of information has always played a pivotal role; however, the technological revolution of the twenty-first century and the advent of digital media have fundamentally altered the structural framework of communication sciences. Modern humanity breathes within an information ecosystem where the traditional institutional gatekeeping of news publication has ceased to exist. While this absolute liberty has democratized access to information, it has concurrently generated an unmanageable deluge of misinformation, deliberate disinformation, and harmful malinformation.¹ It would be no exaggeration to assert that the preeminent challenge of the current digital era is not the quest for facts, but discerning between facts and falsehood. Visual and auditory illusions engineered via artificial intelligence (Deepfakes) and rumors propagated through algorithms have transformed social polarization, character assassination, and state destabilization into a global pandemic. A critical analysis of this situation demonstrates that purely technical filters and AI-based fact-checking tools are insufficient to solve this crisis, as this issue is fundamentally ethical and epistemological rather than technological in nature.²

Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, 'news' (*Khabar*) is not merely a name for the exchange of information; rather, it constitutes the bedrock of human beliefs, Shariah ordinances, and social relations. The Holy Qur'an has established an absolute correlation between knowledge and news, whereby accepting or forwarding any unverified piece of information is jurisprudentially disapproved and ethically condemned.³ The core research problem of this study lies in the reality that although the Holy Qur'an—in Surah Al-Hujurat, Surah An-Nur, and Surah Al-Isra—has outlined distinct principles regarding the verification of news, the prerequisites of testimony, and communicative responsibility, scholastic endeavors to structure these principles into a systematic and applied framework within the context of complex modern digital media and fake news mechanisms remain highly limited. Traditional religious circles generally confine themselves to the recitation and moral sermonization of these verses, whereas contemporary communicative challenges urgently demand that these Qur'anic principles be formulated into an operational methodology for countering modern information disorder.

The significance of this research resides in its establishment of an interdisciplinary dialogue between Islamic communication ethics and modern digital journalism. The objective of the study is to extract the scattered principles of information verification in the Holy Qur'an and integrate them with contemporary fact-checking models to construct a comprehensive "Qur'anic Information Verification Framework (QIVF)." This framework is designed not only to serve as a beacon for researchers and journalists but also to guarantee the digital character cultivation of average social media users.

This research is predicated on the hypothesis that the Islamic concepts of *Tathabbut* (critical verification) and *Tabayyun* (seeking absolute clarification) provide the most robust, sustainable, and divinely anchored foundation for digital literacy in the modern era.⁴

Literature Review

An examination of the academic literature at the intersection of Qur'anic information verification and modern communication reveals that researchers have evaluated this subject from two distinct perspectives: a purely traditional and exegetical approach, and a strictly Western communicative approach. Classical commentators have presented invaluable discourses regarding the verification of information. In their exegeses of Surah Al-Hujurat (49:6), Imam Ibn Jarir al-Tabari and Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi identified the term *Fasiq* (an unrighteous individual) as the primary baseline metric for source unreliability.⁵ Similarly, Allama al-Qurtubi, within the context of the Incident of Slander (*Waqi'ah al-Ifk*) in Surah An-Nur, engaged in a lengthy discourse on the psychological and societal devastation caused by propagating hearsay without verification.⁶ However, because this expansive repository of classical literature was compiled during the era of physical and interpersonal human communication, the direct application of modern concepts such as algorithmic virality, anonymous digital accounts, and multimedia fabrications is absent, necessitating contemporary jurisprudential contextualization (*Ijtihadi Tatbiq*).

On the other hand, an immense volume of research has been produced within Western media studies regarding fake news and information disorder. The report titled "Information Disorder," authored by Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan for the Council of Europe, holds a foundational position in this domain. Wardle delineated three primary classifications of information pollution (misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation) based upon the veracity of the news and the underlying intent to harm.⁷ Similarly, Craig Silverman, in the *Verification Handbook*, introduced technical models for verifying digital sources and social media content.⁸ While these models are technically highly advanced, a critical evaluation exposes their limitation: they are constructed entirely upon materialistic, secular, and institutional foundations. They conspicuously lack the element of internal self-accountability (*Ihtisab*), accountability in the Hereafter, and divine ethics (*Ihsan*) that restrains a Muslim from spreading falsehood even in absolute anonymity.

In recent years, Muslim researchers have authored several papers under the banners of 'Islamic Journalism' and 'Islamic Media Ethics'; however, the vast majority remain descriptive in nature, merely relying on the translations of Qur'anic verses and traditional expositions. Especially in the Urdu language, there is an absence of a comprehensive and principle-oriented study that synthesizes Qur'anic textual parameters with modern fact-checking

techniques to propose an operational, structured, and multi-dimensional framework. This research addresses this scholastic void, proving that the classical science of *Usul al-Hadith* (which encompasses transmitter criticism [*Asma al-Rijal*] and textual criticism [*Naqd al-Matn*]) is actually the historical precursor to modern digital provenance and content analysis, and upon this very foundation, a novel Qur'anic framework can be constructed.⁹

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research is constructed upon a comparative and integrative study of the definitive principles of Islamic epistemology and modern communicative theories. Under Islamic foundations, this study centers around five primary Qur'anic concepts: *Tathabbut* (the critical verification of the external sources of information), *Tabayyun* (comprehending the context and internal reality of a report), *Adalah* (analyzing the character and integrity of the source), *Amanah* (treating information as a sacred societal trust), and *Shahadah* (elevating the transmission of information to the status of a legal and religious testimony). Viewed through the prism of Imam al-Shatibi's *Maqasid al-Shariah*, fake news and rumors constitute a direct assault on *Hifz al-Aql* (protection of human consciousness) and *Hifz al-Ird* (preservation of human honor and dignity). Therefore, this principle of the *Maqasid* serves as the core theoretical axis of this study: any action that compromises the collective intellect and honor of society must be systematically countered, rendering this a binding obligation upon both the state and the individual.¹⁰

Regarding contemporary frameworks, this study utilizes the 'Information Disorder Framework' and 'Gatekeeping Theory.' In the digital age, traditional gatekeeping—where a centralized editor filtered the news—has dissolved, transforming every individual into a publisher and gatekeeper. The Islamic theoretical framework binds this individual gatekeeping to ethical and divine regulations. This theoretical synthesis demonstrates that Islam recognizes the individual conscience as the ultimate fact-checker positioned before the screen, where the constant consciousness of divine oversight (*Ihsan*) regulates digital communication.¹¹

Main Analytical Discussion

1. The Qur'anic Canon of 'Tathabbut' and 'Tabayyun' and Modern Digital Source Criticism

Surah Al-Hujurat (49:6) serves as the Magna Carta of Islamic communication ethics. Allah Almighty declares: "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." In this verse, the text employs both *Tabayyun* and, according to the mutawatir variant readings (*Qira'at*), *Tathabbut* for the verification of news. The analytical breakdown demonstrates that the Qur'anic methodology is not confined to the verification of surface-level sources; rather, it demands penetrating into the

structural depth of the report's context. In the digital age, decontextualization stands as the most lethal and prevalent form of disinformation, wherein an authentic photograph or video is systematically decoupled from its original event and presented alongside a fraudulent narrative and timeline.¹²

The contemporary application of the term *Fasiq* (unrighteous person) within this matrix is of paramount importance. In classical jurisprudence, a *fasiq* is one who commits major sins or whose character lacks integrity. In the digital epoch, every anonymous troll account, clickbait website, and automated bot falls under the legal ruling of a *fasiq*, as their identity, underlying motives, and institutional credibility remain unknown (*Majhool*), or they actively propagate sensationalism for ratings and financial gain.¹³ The Qur'an mandates that information originating from such untrustworthy digital streams must be treated as suspect *by default*, requiring independent verification from reliable sources. Imam al-Jassas, in his classical treatise *Ahkam al-Qur'an*, asserted that the report of a *fasiq* is not to be discarded outright (as it may contain factual truth); rather, judgment must be suspended (*Tawaqquf*) until surrounding circumstantial indicators (*Qara'in*) clarify its veracity or falsehood.¹⁴ This is precisely the operational mechanism termed in modern media literacy as "Stop, Investigate, Trace, and Explore (S.I.T.E)." "

2. The Incident of Slander: A Qur'anic Analysis of Echo Chambers and Virality

A profound tragedy of social media platforms is that sensational and negative news propagates six times faster than verified, positive reports. The definitive Qur'anic analysis of this psychological behavior is found in Surah An-Nur during the exposition of the Incident of Slander (*Waqi'ah al-Ifk*) involving Hazrat Aisha (RA). Allah Almighty severely rebuked this societal behavior, declaring: "When you received it with your tongues and said with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge and thought it was insignificant while it was, in the sight of Allah, tremendous."¹⁵

This verse serves as a brilliant psychological reflection of digital sharing dynamics. "Receiving it with the tongues" implies that the report bypassed the cognitive filters of critical thinking, traveling directly from the ear to the tongue—or, in modern terms, from the eye to the index finger via the 'share' button. Digital media algorithms exploit this exact human vulnerability, engineering emotional states that prompt users to retweet or share information instantly without cognitive deliberation.¹⁶ The severe divine warning against treating the propagation of unverified news as "insignificant" imposes an absolute ethical responsibility upon the contemporary user for every click. Furthermore, the Qur'an introduced the principle of baseline positive presumption (*Husn al-Zan*) during this event: "Why, when you heard it, did not the believing men and believing women think good of one another?" Applied to the modern era, if a fabricated video or audio recording of an individual goes viral, the Qur'anic methodology demands an immediate containment

and rejection of bad faith, until irrefutable technical and legal forensics are established.¹⁷

3. Epistemology of News and Deepfake Technology: The Crisis of Visual Testimony

Deepfake technology has precipitated an existential crisis within human epistemology. For centuries, the operative human maxim was "seeing is believing." Today, however, generative AI can manipulate videos to make any individual appear to say or do things they never conceptualized. The Holy Qur'an has never anchored knowledge and certainty (*Yaqeen*) solely upon superficial sensory data; rather, it anchors them upon rational deduction and corroborative multi-sensory evidence. Surah Al-Isra dictates: *"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."*¹⁸

The explicit coupling of the 'heart/intellect' (*Fu'ad*) alongside sight and hearing constitutes empirical proof that surface-level visual or auditory stimuli (which manifest today as deepfake audio or video) do not constitute definitive sources of knowledge. These sensory inputs must be subjected to the crucible of critical analysis. Within Islamic legal frameworks, visual testimony is evaluated alongside circumstantial evidence (*Qara'in*) and contextual analysis. When the false accusation was leveled against Hazrat Yusuf (AS), the verdict was not derived from superficial visual claims; rather, the fact that his shirt was torn from the back served as a logical, technical, and forensic indicator (*Qarina*) that exposed the falsehood.¹⁹ Therefore, the Qur'anic methodology in the digital age requires a rigorous rational evaluation of a video's metadata, shadows, and lip synchronization, rather than immediately accepting visual data to assassinate someone's character.

4. National Security and Disinformation: The Concept of 'Irjaf'

A highly dangerous exploitation of social media involves weaponizing it to engineer political and national instability. Hostile actors or malicious elements systematically disseminate fabricated rumors regarding economic metrics, state institutions, and political leadership to cultivate systemic fear and despondency among the public. The Holy Qur'an, in Surah Al-Ahzab, classified such individuals as *Al-Murjifun fi al-Madinah* (those who circulate terrifying rumors and sensationalism to destabilize the city), commanding stringent state action against them.²⁰

Similarly, regarding news impacting national security, Surah An-Nisa outlines an incredibly structured communication protocol: *"And when there comes to you information concerning [public] security or fear, they spread it. But if they had referred it back to the Messenger or to those in authority among them, then those who can draw correct conclusions from it would have known it."*²¹ The contemporary application of this principle establishes that every ordinary citizen is not a defense analyst or an expert economist. When reports impacting national security, warfare, or macroeconomics

surface on social media, citizens are strictly prohibited from forwarding them (mandating non-dissemination). Instead, they are legally and religiously required to refer the data to relevant state institutions, subject-matter experts, and verified journalistic platforms (*Ulul Amr* and *Mustanbitin*) for verification. This verse serves as the absolute Qur'anic baseline for crisis communication and professional fact-checking in the digital age.²²

The Qur'ānic Information Verification Framework (QIVF)

In light of the aforementioned analytical discussions and Qur'anic principles, this study proposes an operational, multi-dimensional model for the digital epoch titled the "Qur'anic Information Verification Framework (QIVF)." This framework is an elegant synthesis of modern media literacy and classical *Usul al-Hadith*, comprising the following five progressive phases:

Phase 1: Al-Tawaqquf wa al-Ihtiyat (The Pause and Pre-verification)

This phase addresses the psychology of the individual user. Whenever a sensational, emotionally charged, or provocative piece of digital content appears on the screen, the mandatory initial step is to pause, completely refraining from immediate engagement (liking, sharing, or commenting). This phase is derived from the Prophetic tradition: *"It is enough falsehood for a person to narrate everything he hears."*²³ In the digital age, this means preventing emotions from becoming subservient to algorithms, thereby preserving *Hifz al-Aql*.

Phase 2: Al-Tathabbut fi al-Sanad (Source Credibility and Provenance)

This phase is anchored in the classical principle of transmitter integrity (*Adalat al-Rawi*). The user must critically audit the source of the information (the URL, the account handle, the institutional website). Is it an established, accountable entity or an anonymous (*Fasiq*) digital troll? Is the 'About Us' section transparent? If a report arrives via a WhatsApp forward with no traceable lineage (rendering it analogous to a broken [*Munqati'*] or highly problematic [*Mu'dal*] chain of transmission), it must be deemed scholastically invalid and discarded by default.²⁴

Phase 3: Al-Tabayyun fi al-Matn (Contextual and Content Analysis)

This phase requires a logical and technological evaluation of the report's content. Is the imagery outdated? (Requiring the deployment of Reverse Image Search tools). Does the video align seamlessly with the architectural context claimed in the caption? Is there a structural contradiction between the headline and the body text (Clickbait)? The Qur'an's mandate of *Tabayyun* demands utilizing contemporary digital tools to examine information from every dimension, evaluating facts within their authentic frameworks.²⁵

Phase 4: Adam al-Isha'ah wa al-Satr (Containment and Harm Reduction)

If a piece of news cannot be definitively verified, or even if it is factual but its dissemination violates an individual's right to privacy, propagates

obscenity, or threatens public safety, its absolute containment is a Shariah mandate. Islam commands truthfulness, yet it categorically forbids the indiscriminate broadcast of every truth, particularly when it incites societal chaos (*Fitnah*). The protection of privacy (*Satr al-Muslim*) and the active suppression of rumor-mongering are mandatory components of this framework.²⁶

Phase 5: Al-Mas'uliyah wa al-Ihtisab (Ethical and Eschatological Accountability)

This final phase represents the unique hallmark that distinguishes the Islamic framework from secular Western fact-checking models. Here, the user operates under the profound conviction that every single keystroke and digital action is monitored and transcribed by the recording angels (*Kiraman Katibin*), and that they will face absolute accountability for their digital footprint on the Day of Judgment. Under the absolute Qur'anic principle – "Not a word does he utter but there is with him a watchful observer" (Qaf 50:18) – this eschatological accountability shields the human mind from blind digital conformity.²⁷

Contemporary Application

The practical deployment of the QIVF model is an absolute necessity within modern Muslim societies, particularly in Pakistan. An audit of Pakistan's digital landscape reveals a space severely fractured by intense political polarization, sectarian friction, and conflicting state narratives. The systemic dissemination of fabricated blasphemy accusations via WhatsApp and Facebook – which have catastrophically culminated in horrific episodes of mob lynching – is the direct consequence of an absolute absence of the Qur'an's directive of *Tabayyun*.²⁸ When an ordinary citizen becomes volatile and breaks the law based on an ambiguous forwarded text message, they commit a manifest violation of Surah Al-Hujurat.

If this Qur'anic framework is integrated systematically into educational curricula, weekly sermons (*Khut* بَلاَت), and the operational execution of electronic crime laws (such as PECA), a healthy digital culture can be cultivated. For instance, awareness campaigns launched by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and the Ministry of Information should replace dry, secular legal jargon with intrinsic Qur'anic values (such as *Amanah*, *Diyanah*, and *Taqwa*), since religious rhetoric carries far greater communicative authority with the Pakistani public than state vernacular.²⁹ Furthermore, university curricula for Media Studies should teach the history of *Usul al-Hadith* and *Asma al-Rijal* alongside modern fact-checking methodologies, empowering students to realize that the most scientifically rigorous methodology for information verification is an organic component of their own civilizational heritage.

Critical Evaluation

To maintain scholastic objectivity, the deployment of this theoretical

model must be critically evaluated against modern structural hurdles and psychological challenges.

The primary obstacle is the characteristic 'speed' of digital media. The structural design of digital networks explicitly incentivizes instantaneous reactions and high-velocity sharing. A post can achieve global virality within minutes. Conversely, the Qur'an's methodology of *Tawaqquf* (pausing) and rigorous investigation is naturally time-consuming. Users routinely succumb to FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), fearing that delaying their response will render them irrelevant. To mitigate this structural challenge, ethical character development must be augmented by engineering technical user interfaces that trigger pop-up interventions, prompting users to pause and deliberate before sharing unverified links.³⁰

The second challenge is Confirmation Bias. Contemporary psychological data proves that human beings readily accept fabricated news as absolute truth if it validates their preexisting political or sectarian biases. If the misinformation targets an opposing faction, users routinely forward it without dedicating a single moment to verification. The Holy Qur'an, in Surah Al-Ma'idah, provides the ultimate antidote to this cognitive vulnerability: *"And do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness."*³¹ The digital execution of this verse demands maintaining absolute justice (*Adl*) regarding news validation, even if the verified truth directly vindicates your worst adversary. This represents an exceptionally high moral threshold, serving as the ultimate test for the contemporary digital user.

Conclusion

This comprehensive, thematic, and analytical study demonstrates that the information verification methodology presented by the Holy Qur'an was not a localized framework confined to the oral or tribal communication matrix of seventh-century Arabia; rather, it possesses a universal, rational, and psychological depth completely applicable to the highly intricate digital information ecosystems and generative AI paradigms of the twenty-first century. Answering the fundamental questions of this research, it has been proven empirically that the contemporary global crisis generated by fake news, disinformation, and deepfakes is the logical consequence of abandoning the Qur'an's mandates of *Tathabbut* and *Tabayyun*.

The original contribution of this study is the formal conceptualization of the "Qur'anic Information Verification Framework (QIVF)," providing an operational, ethical, and systematic roadmap that bridges classical Islamic sciences with modern EdTech fact-checking parameters. This framework demonstrates that source criticism (*Naqd al-Sanad*), logical content analysis (*Naqd al-Matn*), the active containment of national security risks (*Adam al-Isha'ah*), and absolute eschatological awareness (*Al-Mas'uliyah*) are the pillars upon which a secure digital citizenship must be anchored.

While the metrics designed by Western media networks are highly efficient at executing the technical verification of data, they remain fundamentally incapable of reforming the internal character of the user because they are built upon secular regulations. In contrast, the Islamic methodology awakens the human conscience, elevating information verification from a bureaucratic journalistic code to a binding Shariah obligation and an act of worship. Consequently, it is incumbent upon state policymakers, communication experts, and religious leaders across the Muslim world to institutionalize this Qur'anic model within national digital literacy frameworks. Until the digital training of our upcoming generations is anchored upon these Qur'anic ethical lines, safeguarding society from the devastation of fake news and algorithmic manipulation will remain impossible. The light of the Holy Qur'an remains the sole path capable of drawing a distinct, unambiguous line of demarcation between truth and falsehood amidst the darkness of the digital age.



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