

Muslim Scholars and Challenges of Social Media *Da'wah*: Cyberbullying in Perspective

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Abstract

The rapid development of internet technology has transformed how social media platforms are used worldwide for communication. This article focuses on Muslim scholars and the challenges of social media *Da'wah* focusing on cyberbullying of scholars on social media platforms. The most of the social media-based social interaction tools are user-generated, in contrast to traditional media. It enables the user to control the message's content, with or without restriction or regulation. Some Muslims have been lured to use social media in violation of rules laid down in accordance with fundamental Islamic teachings because of their freedom to sign up for an account on any website of their choice and the freedom it involves. Accordingly, this study has identified some of the behavior of cyberbullying against Muslim scholars on social media and provide solution according to the Islamic teachings. The paper adopted qualitative survey where Interviews were conducted with seasoned social users. The researchers purposively selected seven participants for the study because they are Muslims and possessed the knowledge about the phenomenon investigated. Some of the findings of the study revealed that Muslim scholars faces challenge cyberbullying in the course of carrying out *Da'wah* on social media. The paper's conclusion is that in order to create a more peaceful and safer digital environment, social media users should communicate with good morals and manners, especially on online forums.

Keywords: Muslim Scholars, Challenges, Cyberbullying, Social Media, *Da'wah*

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ABSTRAK

Pesatnya perkembangan teknologi internet telah mengubah cara platform media sosial digunakan di seluruh dunia untuk berkomunikasi. Artikel ini berfokus pada ulama Muslim dan tantangan dakwah melalui media sosial yang berfokus pada cyberbullying terhadap ulama di platform media sosial. Sebagian besar alat interaksi sosial berbasis media sosial dihasilkan oleh pengguna, berbeda dengan media tradisional. Hal ini memungkinkan pengguna untuk mengontrol isi pesan, dengan atau tanpa batasan atau peraturan. Beberapa Muslim telah terpikat untuk menggunakan media sosial dengan melanggar aturan yang ditetapkan sesuai dengan ajaran dasar Islam karena kebebasan mereka untuk mendaftar akun di situs web mana pun yang mereka pilih dan kebebasan yang terkandung di dalamnya. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini telah mengidentifikasi beberapa perilaku cyberbullying terhadap ulama di media sosial dan memberikan solusi sesuai ajaran Islam. Makalah ini mengadopsi survei kualitatif di mana Wawancara dilakukan dengan pengguna sosial berpengalaman. Beberapa temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa ulama Muslim menghadapi tantangan cyberbullying dalam menjalankan aktivitas dakwahnya di media sosial. Kesimpulan penelitian ini adalah untuk menciptakan lingkungan digital yang lebih damai dan aman, pengguna media sosial harus berkomunikasi dengan moral dan sopan santun, terutama di forum online.

Kata Kunci : *Ulama Muslim, Tantangan, Cyberbullying, Media Sosial, Dakwah*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) has been facilitated by the Industrial Revolution in the contemporary age. Numerous online tools and social media sites have advanced, which has improved human existence (Alim, 2019). The misuse of facilities to engage in actions that are against the principles of consumerism, civil law, and Islamic law is one way that this development inadvertently has a detrimental impact on the virtual citizens. Cyberbullying, the spread of false information, defamation, and misleading information are a few of them, along with online transaction fraud.

The rise of information and communication technology (ICT) has improved society's quality of life. Many services may be conveniently accessed and handled online. However, not all users take full advantage of ICT development advancements. Some of them have been found to exploit cyberspace as a means of committing crimes and engaging in profiteering, which adds to the horrific cybercrimes. The government has implemented certain efforts to boost awareness and promote the use of the internet and computers in a constructive and ethical manner in response to the

worrying rise in cybercrime (Harun, 2018).

The misuse of modern communication tools such as computers and smartphones aimed at bullying persons on social media is now observed to be increasing and evolving in various forms. Symptoms of cyberbullying are more prevalent nowadays due to the transmission viral of videos and photos, better known as trolls on social medias such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and so on (Ansong et al., 2013). Often, social media users use the comments section to share pictures or make a post that to vilify the victim because it is the most exposed and easily accessible space (Griffiths, 2014). Even while the majority of users claim they are only doing it for fun and pleasure, most people frequently ignore the consequences suffered by the victims. For others, such incidents cause low self-esteem, a higher risk of mental health issues, depression, and, worst of all, suicide ideation. As a result of the potential threats to society, cyberbullying perpetrators are liable to punishment from an Islamic perspective.

Indeed, social media is a public forum where everyone can post remarks. Users can share their opinions on a wide range of topics, from frivolous topics like

entertainment and sports to important ones like politics, economics, and religious subjects. There are users that disregard conversational etiquette and ethics in communication. They are free to post rude comments on other users' accounts, even if the people being condemned are total strangers to the point where it damages the victim's reputation and dignity (Salga, 2015). Similar to how too much information makes it easy for users to disseminate rumours, defamation, and gossip, too much information can also have these negative effects. Such behaviour has repercussions and damages other people's reputations. In addition to these warning signals, internet addiction is currently causing worry among Malaysian online users. This is because they spend a lot of time on social media. Such an act may have an impact on their psychological well-being, and some people who engage in antisocial behaviour may turn to solitude.

Cyberbullying in Social Media

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that happens in electronic platforms. Cyberbullying is an aggressive and intentional act done by an individual or group repeatedly and over time using electronic platform to individual or group that cannot defend themselves (Smith, et al., 2008). Cyberbullying is an awful or bad

thing an individual or group do to another individual or group on cyberspace. Cyberbullying can be measured by five big indicators; (i) flaming (ii) slandering (iii) identity theft (iv) reveal other's secret, (v) deleting or blocking someone from the group.

According to Hasniza, Yusri, and Fatimah (2018), cyberbullying is the act of harassing or intimidating someone online through the use of technology-based communications such as social media, emails, instant messages, and mobile phones. What is even more disturbing is that these warning signs are multiplying and changing into new forms, necessitating definitive cautions. Due to the internet's "anonymity" setting, it can be challenging to determine who the bully is sometimes. Because the contents from cyberbullying persist in cyberspace even after the bully takes them down, access to it is also persistent. This puts a lot of stress on some bullied individuals, and in some circumstances, those individuals consider suicide as a result of the pressure (Hasniza et al., 2018).

In connection with the growth of social networks and the rising usage of social media, cyberbullying is a problem that is getting worse (Cohen, 2018). On social media platforms like Facebook,

WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, and others, the unchecked transmission (viral) of videos and photographs, or better known as trolls, is one of the more widespread problems today (Ansong, et al., 2013). Social media users frequently post in the comments because it is the most visible and convenient place to share images or make posts that denigrate the victim (Griffiths, 2014). Even while the majority of users claim they are only doing it for fun and pleasure, many individuals frequently ignore the consequences suffered by the victims. For some, such incidents can cause low self-esteem, an increased risk of mental health issues, depression, and, worst of all, suicide thinking. Ironically, more individuals are becoming bolder in the digital realm and speaking out against others in an unpleasant, insulting, and demeaning manner. Some individuals take advantage of the anonymity function, using it as a major excuse to create a few bogus identities with nefarious intentions.

The culture of trolling is one of the prevalent types of cyberbullying in the context of today's social media. Troll is a term used on the internet to describe someone who starts an argument or engages in abuse of others for the sole intention of diverting attention away from their own content or to achieve a specific objective (Collins, 2019). The word "troll"

derives from a fishing technique in which anglers use to entice fish to the bait before gently withdrawing the rod out of the water (Fragoso, 2015). Trolls engage in provocative, ridiculing, insulting, and conversation-disturbing online behaviour, whether on purpose or accidentally (Anuar & Nadia, 2019). This behaviour is deemed to draw attention and engage others in pointless discussion. Stereotyping, politics, religion, racial prejudice, and entertainment-related issues are frequently utilised trollers to lure people (Tijjani, 2013).

They typically behave out of boredom and only for their own pleasure (Ansong et al., 2013). However, some people are motivated by resentment towards certain people, therefore they choose to denigrate, humiliate, and defame the victim by making false accusations or sending out phoney communications in an effort to damage the victim's reputation (Tijjani, 2013). This condition is more commonly referred to as the (TPS) Tall Poppy Syndrome, and it occurs when people post derogatory things on social media about other people because they are upset about their accomplishments that are superior to their own. Therefore, it is not unexpected that this malady is also referred to as "the politics of envy." This is related to human psychology and

behaviour, where the majority of people struggle to recognise the accomplishments of others who have achieved more than they have because they dislike the idea of "tall poppies" (O'Neill, 2014). Such successful people will then be denigrated and assaulted with unjustified criticism and derogatory remarks that have absolutely nothing to do with their accomplishment.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is a survey type which adopted qualitative techniques to elicit primary data from the participants. The population for the study were civil servants and a student. To elicit the data, the researchers conducted In-Depth Interview (IDI) and non-participant observation. The paper adopted purposive sampling technique to select the participants for the interviews and observations, this has enabled the researchers to select participant who possess in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon investigated. This is because the aim of qualitative study is not to cover large sample but to study select few participants and examine the phenomenon deeply. The researchers purposively selected seven participants and were interviewed based on the issue investigated. The elicited from the participants were transcribed verbatim, coded and analyzed based on theme study.

Similarly, data collated from the observations were integrated with the data generated from the interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cyberbullying as Challenge to Social Media *Da'wah*

Muslim *Du'at* are facing a lot of challenges in terms of carrying out *Da'wah* in social media. One such challenge is cyberbullying. Dayyabu Aminu Jahun evinced that Muslim *Du'at* is often trolled online not because of what they propagate but rather they are being abused because either they did not belong to the same religious group. As a result, anytime they extend any message on certain Islamic teachings, they are attacked either through insult which ranges from name-calling or character assassination.

Bullying of Muslim *Du'at* is very common in the digital world today. Bukar Abdullahi posited that scholars are always been insulted as they do *Da'wah* on social media, most especially on Facebook and Twitter. The *Da'i* is being harassed online for no offence. At times, the reason for the harassment and attack may be due to the method of scholar's approach to certain religious teachings which either the bullied is guilty of. But his name was never mentioned by the *Da'i* in the course presenting his message online. Muslim

scholars are always victims of such acts in social media from those who misuse modern communication platforms for their selfish interests.

According to Fauziya Yusuf Atakpe asserted that cyberbullying also occurred to Muslim scholars who are criticized online because of their stance on some Islamic rulings and for that they are being trolled through Twitter or Facebook. An example is when a Muslim scholar was asked about holding Friday prayers by 12:30 pm, and the scholar's reply did not go down well with some social media users and for that resorted to bullying the Muslim scholar.

One of the major causes of cyberbullying of Muslim scholars on social media as observed by Uthman Muhammad Alkali, is the issue of personality clash. He stressed that the idea of no one can do better than me is causing a lot of problems among Muslim *Du'at* in cyberspace. Scholars attack each other on social media thereby calling each name and or using derogatory words about the personality of another scholar. Not only that but to the extent of accusing a particular of insanity, half-baked knowledge etc.

Bullying for personal grudge in the real world is another challenge to *Da'wah* in social media by Muslim scholars. Jabir Hassan Gana asserted that a lot of Muslim scholars faces transfer of aggression from the real world to the cyberspace from fellow Muslim social media users who sees the social media as a platform where they can settle certain grievances they had with a particular scholar and for which the scholar knows nothing about. The bullied do not mind the message the scholars are trying to pass across but is main focus on the page/channel of the scholar is to find fault so that he can attack and troll the scholars. With this, some Muslim scholars find it difficult to cope with the situation because they feel traumatise.

The proselytization of the message of Islam is obligatory upon every Muslim and therefore anyone carrying out such task should expect criticism at all time. Ismail Khalid Omolori corroborates that the reason why Muslim scholars engage in social media *Da'wah* fine themselves in the centre of cyberbullying is because they themselves troll each other. In some cases, the bullying of Muslim scholars does not come from the ordinary followers on social media but from their fellow *Du'at* (Muslim scholars). These scholars attacked each other either because of sectarian difference that exist between

them and or due to vested interest. They call themselves name most especially at the comment section of a particular scholar's page/channel to the extent of referring to that particular scholar of having half-baked knowledge of the religion.

Bara'atu Malam Harisu corroborates that some Muslims are fond of casting aspersion on Muslim scholars in social media most especially if such scholar did not belong to their sect or religious group with the intention of tarnishing his reputation just because of mere sectarian difference which hardly can be found among the adherent of other religions. It is very difficult for the followers of religion other than Islam to criticize their leaders on the social media. But some Muslims find it fashionable to insult or cast aspersion on their leaders be they political or religious leaders via the social media.

It has been observed by the researchers that Muslims on the social media are always fighting one another and breaking the bond of brotherhood which Islam has established between Muslims. It is also observed that when one goes through most of the posts and comments by Muslims on the social media, it is mostly derogatory comments against each other, against Allah's call on Muslims to be

brothers to each other. In some instances, on the social media, due to rivalry, a Muslim will make photo-shop of a fellow Muslim scholar either naked or hugging a woman just to portray him as a *Fasiq*. All these are done merely because they do not share the same opinions over certain aspects of Islam with the scholar. This then triggers a chain of reactions, in like manner, from the followers of the injured scholar.

Not only that, such cyberbullying usually occurred when a scholar shared a *fatwa* on Facebook or other social media platforms and if such *fatwa* does not suit the interest of other fellow Muslims, they resort to naming calling, and even declaring persons who do not share in their *fatwa* as *kafr*. A fight soon ensues on the comment section with ugly replies to each other via the social media. Islam as religion the teaches morality is against calling a fellow Muslim brother an infidel. The Noble Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) says;

Ibn `Umar (May Allah be pleased with them) said: The Messenger of (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) says, "When a person calls his brother (in Islam) a disbeliever, one of them will certainly deserve the title. If the addressee is so as he has asserted, the disbelief of the man is

confirmed, but if it is untrue, then it will revert to him." (Riyad Us-Salihin, Book 18, Hadith 1732).

He also said,

Abu Dharr (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying, "When any Muslim accuses another Muslim of sin or of disbelief, the reproach rebounds upon the one who utters it, if the other person is not deserving of it" (Riyad Us-Salihin, Book 18, Hadith 1560).

An Islamic Approach to Social Media Bullying

Humans are distinctively social creatures, and depending on the kinds of connections they make with one another, each one adds colour to the lives of those around them. Social contact is the basis for interaction since it allows for the measurement of both parties' reactions even in the absence of physical contact. When the parties involved get to know one another better, the original foundational relationship eventually evolves to a deeper connection in the form of communication. Allah the Most-High states in Surah al-Hujuraat;

O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the Most honourable of

you in the Sight of Allâh is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa (i.e. one of the Muttaqûn). Verily, Allâh is All-Knowing, All-Aware (Surah al-Hujuraat, 49:13).

Islam is a religion that values diversity in people, thus it encourages people of all origins to get to know one another and maintain relationships with one another. Through the interchange and sharing of language, culture, knowledge, technology, talent, and professional expertise, this mutual partnership should be a means for beneficial sharing. Everything is now available at your disposal because to the rapid development of information and communication technologies during the contemporary age. Although there are numerous advantages to this growth, it is important to pay attention to the privacy and security needs of every internet user (Wahyuni & Ana, 2019).

Internet users' human values must not be compromised by technological expertise, which should not turn the internet into a tool for manipulating and infringing on the rights of other people. In actuality, social media and online applications used ethically make the internet a fantastic platform for a variety of tasks and modern demands. Because of this, Islam does not support any actions like cyberbullying that might harm relationships and violate

human rights. As a result, in order to protect human rights and dignity as well as build a peaceful and respectful social ecology, the Qur'an al-Sunnah outlines ban and affirmations on such behaviours.

Fabrication of Information

To get people's attention, the phenomenon of cyberbullying needs to contain an important component of falsehood. Since the facts and made-up stories are mixed up, the majority of these activities result in information being falsified. This is done intentionally to pull down and denigrate specific individuals. As a result, it is not unexpected that the majority of the material of phoney communications is satire and outright lies. Making things up is absolutely forbidden in Islam and is seen as a grave sin. In fact, the offenders are also warned that they will face harsh punishment in the afterlife. It was narrated from Awsat (bin Isma'il) Al-Bajali that:

He heard Abu Bakr, when the Prophet (S.A.W) had passed away, saying: "The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W) stood in this place where I am standing, last year." Then Abu Bakr wept, then he said: "You must adhere to the truth, for with it comes righteousness and they both lead to Paradise. And you must beware of lying for with it comes immorality, and they

both lead to Hell. Ask Allah for *Al-Mu'afah*, for no one is given anything after certainty that is better than *Mu'afah*. Do not envy one another, do not hate one another, do not sever ties with one another, do not turn your backs on one another and be, O slaves of Allah, brothers" (Sunan Ibn Majah, Vol. 5, Book 34, Hadith 3849).

Therefore, it is against Islamic teachings to create any components of untruth in interpersonal interactions, even if it is merely a jest. Narrated Mu'awiyah ibn Jaynah al-Qushayri:

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Woe to him who tells things, speaking falsely, to make people laugh thereby. Woe to him! Woe to him! (Sunan Abi Dawud, Book 42, Hadith 4972).

This serves as a reminder that, in addition to making an effort to be a good Muslim, everyone must exercise self-control to avoid normalising deception under the guise of humour. Truth be told, lying not only tramples on one's integrity and dignity but also causes anarchy and disarray in society, which breeds strife between groups that are at odds.

Defamation Character

Allah has given every person the priceless possessions of dignity and honour. Islam therefore places a strong focus on the necessity to safeguard one's reputation (*hifz al-'ird*), which tries to prevent any behaviour from undermining a person's honour. Every human being is forbidden from harassing, demeaning, making fun of, or otherwise harming the honour of any other person because doing so is considered to be a violation of the value of human dignity (*karamah insaniyyah*), which is one of the reasons why people were created (Sule & Yahaya, 2020).

The harassment that frequently takes place on social media is directed at public figures and other powerful people with the goal of damaging their reputations and causing them to lose respect from the public. Because this act involves shame and dignity, which should serve as the limits of every person's social relationship, it is strongly forbidden in Islam. Almighty Allah states in Surah al-Hujuraat 49:11.

O You who believe! let not a group scoff at another group, it may be that the latter are better than the former; nor let (some) women scoff at other women, it may be that the latter are better than the former, nor defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames. How bad is it, to

insult one's brother after having faith (i.e. to call Your Muslim brother (a faithful believer) as: "O sinner", or "O wicked", etc.) and Whosoever does not repent, then such are indeed *Zâlimûn* (wrong-doers, etc.) (Qur'an; Surah al-Hujuraat 49:11).

Islam approaches this matter from a different angle, despite some perpetrators' use of the defence that they were merely making a joke so what they do wouldn't be taken seriously. This place must continue to be off-limits to any aggressiveness and behaviour that can subject the people to humiliation and degradation. The ban of such act is actually designed to preserve human dignity and honour. Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) stated:

The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W) ascended the *Minbar* and called out with a raised voice: 'O you who accepted Islam with his tongue, while faith has not reached his heart! Do not harm the Muslims, nor revile them, nor spy on them to expose their secrets. For indeed whoever tries to expose his Muslims brother's secrets, Allah exposes his secrets wide open, even if he were in the depth of his house.'" He (*Nafl*) said: 'One day Ibn 'Umar looked at the House- or – the *Ka'bah* and said: 'What is it that is more honored than you, and whose honor is more sacred than yours!

And the believer's honor is more sacred to Allah than yours (Jami' at-Tirmidhi, Vol. 4, Book 1, Hadith 2032).

Mockery and Ridiculing

In verse eleven (11) there are three prohibitions regarding social interaction with our fellow Muslims. These are (i) Mocking someone (ii) Calling people by offensive nicknames they do not like. Almighty Allah says in the Glorious Qur'an;

O You who believe! let not a group scoff at another group, it may be that the latter are better than the former; nor let (some) women scoff at other women, it may be that the latter are better than the former, nor defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames. How bad is it, to insult one's brother after having faith (i.e. to call Your Muslim brother (a faithful believer) as: "O sinner", or "O wicked", etc.). and Whosoever does not repent, then such are indeed *Zâlimûn* (wrong-doers, etc.) (Qur'an; Surah al-Hujuraat 49:11).

Mocking does not only imply mocking with the tongue but it also includes mimicking somebody, making pointed references to him, laughing at his words, or his works, or his appearance, or his dress, or calling the people's attention to some defect or blemish in him so that others also may laugh at him not only on

social media but on a general term. All this is incorporated in mocking. What is actually prohibited is that one should make fun of and ridicule another, for under such ridiculing there always lie feelings of one's own superiority and the other's abasement and contempt, which are morally unworthy of a gentleman (Sule & Yahaya, 2020).

Moreover, it hurts the other person, which causes mischief to spread in society. Allah's command entails that a person should not be called by a name or a title which may cause him disgrace, e.g. calling someone a sinner or a hypocrite, *Kafir* (disbeliever) or calling somebody a lame or blind one, or one-eyed, or giving him a nickname containing a reference to some defect or blemish in him, or in his parents, or in his family, or calling a person a Jew or a Christian even after fully aware that he is a Muslim, or giving such a nickname to a person, or a family, or a community, or a group, which may bring condemnation or disgrace on it.

In comparison to other creations, Allah SWT created humans as the best and most revered creature. One person is not superior to another just because of their physical characteristics, complexion, or tribe. In fact, piety, or how much a person devotes themselves to Allah, is the single

factor that determines how glorious a person is. Islam prohibits any acts of harm, insult, humiliation, and slander, including the use of abhorrent and hateful language, which is all too common in today's social media. This restriction aims to prevent animosity between the offender and the victim as well as to safeguard the person's personality. Abu Umamah narrated that the Noble Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

Al-Haya' and Al-'Iy are two branches of faith, and Al-Badha (obscene talk) and Al-Bayan (too much talk) are two branches of Hypocrisy (Jami` at-Tirmidhi, Vol. 4, Book 1, Hadith 2027).

The worst sins, and those that Allah expressly forbids, are calling someone a name, insulting them, or making them feel inferior. In addition to causing a divide between people, such heinous deeds make the perpetrators feel overwhelmed by negative traits like *riya*, where they believe they are more honourable and that it is acceptable to insult and make fun of others who are inferior to them. This kind of behaviour falls far short of the ideal Islam describes as honourable. Narrated 'Abdullah bin Umar, that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

Allah's Apostle said, "A Muslim is a brother of another Muslim, so he should not oppress him, nor should he hand him over to an oppressor. Whoever fulfilled the needs of his brother, Allah will fulfill his needs; whoever brought his (Muslim) brother out of a discomfort, Allah will bring him out of the discomforts of the Day of Resurrection, and whoever screened a Muslim, Allah will screen him on the Day of Resurrection (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 43, Hadith No. 622).

It is against Islamic communication principles for some social media users to expose, humiliate, and denigrate others while making jokes or having fun. For the sake of enjoyment, jokes cannot contain even the slightest amount of lies or insults that violate the honour and dignity of others without taking into account the consequences suffered by each victim. Narrated Al-Ma'rur;

At Ar-Rabadha I met Abu Dhar who was wearing a cloak, and his slave, too, was wearing a similar one. I asked about the reason for it. He replied, "I abused a person by calling his mother with bad names." The Prophet said to me, 'O Abu Dhar! Did you abuse him by calling his mother with bad names You still have some characteristics of ignorance. Your slaves are your brothers and Allah has put

them under your command. So, whoever has a brother under his command should feed him of what he eats and dress him of what he wears. Do not ask them (slaves) to do things beyond their capacity (power) and if you do so, then help them.' " (Sahih al-Bukhari: Vol. 1, Book 2, Hadith 30).

Exposure of People Secrecy

The religion of Islam is vehemently against intruding into people's privacy, not only into their private apartments, but this also includes our dealings on social media. Muslims trying to dictate or spy into other people affairs with the intention of getting their faults and spreading same either on Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and other social media platforms (Sule & Yahaya, 2020). It has been observed by the researchers that, some Muslims online are of the habits of intruding other people's profile either on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc. with the aim of downloading their pictures or make screenshots of their messages and share same on social media without the prior permission of the owner or with the intention of exposing their secret to the world. Prophet Muhammad (*Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam*) says in a *Hadith*;

It was narrated by Hudhaifah (may Allah be pleased with him) said I heard the Prophet (*Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam*)

saying "A *Qattat* will not enter Paradise (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vol. 8, Hadith No. 82).

A *Qattat* is a person who conveys disagreeable, false information from one person to another with the intention of causing harm and enmity between them. It is *haram* to look into someone's private conversation, to go into their browser history and to go into their private photo collection on social media without their permission. One has no right to find out people's secret and to expose it to the world. Islam is against thinking bad about a fellow Muslim, this is because it is the worst type of lies. Many Muslims are of the habit of that on social media.

Social engagement on online platforms has become simpler and faster because of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools and the growth of social media. However, the abuse of this medium has resulted in a rise in such conduct either directly or indirectly through the actions of irresponsible people who disseminate these immoral habits. This behaviour has unintentionally resulted in slander (*al-ghibah*) and gossip (*al-namimah*), both of which are prohibited by Islam. Allah the Most-High said;

O You who believe! avoid much suspicions, indeed some suspicions are sins. and spy not, neither backbite one another. would one of You like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it (so hate backbiting). and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is the one who accepts repentance, Most Merciful (Qur'an; Surah al-Hujuraat 49:12).

Through his remarks, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah upon him) also provided an explanation for this behaviour:

Do not envy one another, and do not inflate prices for one another, and do not hate one another, and do not turn away from one another, and do not undercut one another in trade, but [rather] be slaves of Allah and brothers [amongst yourselves] (Muslim, no 6541).

As a result, those responsible for such behaviour, whether as the primary culprit or propagandist, will face punishment from Allah in the afterlife. If the information they distribute comes from reliable and trustworthy sources, then yes. Because Islam forbids any libelous behaviour, the culprit or propagator could face worse penalty if they just made up the material and conveyed it to others, even

for amusement or fun. Since their acts negatively impact the victim's life, the propagator who has been aiding in such behaviour is subject to the same level of punishment as the perpetrator. Allah the Most -High declares in Surah al-Nur;

Verily, those who like that (the crime of) illegal sexual intercourse should be propagated among those who believe, they will have a painful torment in This world and in the Hereafter. and Allah knows and you know not (Surah al-Nur, 24: 19).

Social engagement is made simple and quick with the use of online social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. However, using the internet unethically to the point that addiction is sparked can have a negative impact on not just a person's health but also the health of the entire society (Lanaj et al., 2014). Additionally, this advancement has unintended adverse effects upon the digital populace, particularly when tools are used improperly for illegal or unethical activity. Cyberbullying is more prevalent among people who spend more time online (Akbulut et al, 2010).

Because of this, all individuals using social media should exercise restraint so as not to invade the privacy or dignity of other

users. Even though cyberspace has no boundaries, users of social media nevertheless need to respect the rights and privacy of others. Everyone is responsible for fostering a secure atmosphere wherever they are by showing respect and always abiding by communication principles, whether the interaction is physical or through the digital world. Indeed, it is unethical and has to be discouraged to harass people online and intrude on their personal space. The rights and restrictions imposed by the government on the use of social media must be understood by each party.

CONCLUSION

Everyone has a strong need to use social media, especially in the contemporary age. On the other hand, its immoral use leaves society open to social media exploitation. One of the most recent trends among social media users and those who use it more frequently is cyberbullying. These actions may have detrimental effects on society if they are not stopped. Even though the perpetrators of this cyberbullying seem to enjoy it, this behaviour is actually wrong and against the law. Islam forbids it as well, irrespective of the victim's background. In order to foster a more peaceful and safer digital ecosystem, users of digital media

should conduct with ethics and good manners when communicating, particularly on cyber platforms.

As a result, this study adds to the corpus of current knowledge on cyberbullying in Nigeria in respect to social media. The key value of this paper is that it offers guidelines for peaceful interaction on digital platforms from an Islamic viewpoint. Islam upholds the right to free speech, but only when it is carried out in accordance with predetermined rules. A tolerant and cohesive digital society can be created by upholding moral, ethical, and religious principles. Future research should evaluate Malaysia's grasp of the effects of cyberbullying behaviour. This is a significant discovery that advances both the national cybersecurity agenda and the cohesion of Malaysia's digital society.

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- Uthman Muhammad Alkali, (37 Years), interviewed at Aliero, Kebbi State, Nigeria on 05/03/2023.

List of Informants

- Bara'atu Malam Harisu, (40 Years), Civil Servant, interviewed at Kafin Hausa, Jigawa State, Nigeria on 17/03/2023.
- Bukar Abdullahi, (34 Years), Civil Servant, interviewed at Damaturu, Yobe State, Nigeria on 12/2/2023.
- Dayyabu Aminu Jahun, (45 Years), Teacher, interviewed at Hadieja, Jigawa State, Nigeria on 09/2/2023.
- Fauziya Yusuf Atakpe, (29 Years), Student, interviewed at Kawo, Kaduna, Nigeria on 21/2/2023.
- Ismail Khalid Omolori, (49 Years), Teacher, interviewed at Anyingba, Kogi State, Nigeria on 17/03/2023.