

## Hold Your Fingers: The Communication Ethics on WhatsApp Based on the Hadith

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### ABSTRACT

In recent years, the widespread dissemination of false information on social media, especially WhatsApp, has become a major concern. This calls for a comprehensive analysis, emphasizing the Hadith perspective, in the context of Covid-19 misinformation in Indonesia. This article qualitatively analyses the spread of false information through WhatsApp, from the Hadith perspective. This study collected and analyzed WhatsApp messages circulating in Indonesia from 2020 to 29 May 2022, using the Turnbackhoax website to identify false information related to COVID-19. There were 217 messages classified into various categories, such as understanding COVID-19, symptoms, government policies, services, spread, treatment, positive patient data, task force, deaths, economic, social, and religious impacts, vaccines, and masks. The findings show that WhatsApp is a social media platform that is widely used to spread false information. The findings were then analyzed using Hadith, which revealed WhatsApp communication ethics such as silence is better than communicating false information, selectively sharing information, and conducting investigations. This research is expected to contribute to understanding the method in clear standardization, namely the Hadith of the Prophet. Anyone can use this method to prevent the spread of false information through various mass communication media, not only WhatsApp.

**Keywords:** *COVID-19, misinformation, communication ethics, hadith, WhatsApp.*

### INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 establishment as a pandemic not only brings challenges to the efforts to break the chain of virus spread (Darmawan, Miharja, Waluyajati, & Isnaeniah, 2020; Jubba, 2021), but also relates to the excessive selectivity of information in society. The existence of an infodemic makes it challenging to distinguish between true and false information. Ironically, the spread of incorrect information during the pandemic impacts the blurring of reality and worsens the situation (Idris, Jalli, & Mohamed Salleh, 2022; Pujarama, Prasetya, & Yustisia, 2020). False information that spreads can interfere with efforts to find solutions, establish policies, create unrest, lose trust, and even cause casualties, as the story experienced by Hasanuddin (63), a resident of East Jakarta, in early July 2021. He was a victim who died after being infected with COVID-19. Even though he was hospitalized for several hours, he couldn't be saved. The family deeply regrets what was happened to Hasanuddin (Rahayu, 2021). The most dangerous was not due to the virus or the slow handling at the hospital but the false information that affected his understanding of COVID-19 (Galvão, 2021; Gisondi et al., 2022).

For instance, a message sent by a person naming himself Brad Pit is an example of false information that had gone viral in Indonesia through WhatsApp groups. He shared the news to make people aware of the "Covid Drama." He wrote the false information that Covid was just a common cold, which was then framed by WHO to become a pandemic. The

testimony of the medical team, such as Dr. Siti Fadhilah (former Minister of Health of Indonesia) and the IDI (Indonesian Doctors Association) community are graffitied to gain trust. The message also mentioned the arrangement of spacing rows in congregational prayers, the use of masks and rapid tests associated with the lack of quality of faith, and the strength of creed for Muslims who believe COVID-19 is a pandemic. The false information closed with a statement that the message came from "someone's experience during the Pandemic issue." Then, the COVID Task Force acted by providing an official explanation and presenting accurate data. Due to COVID-19 infection, 3,895,661 deaths have been recorded internationally, while 56,371 deaths were cases in Indonesia. Thus, Brad Pit's account uploaded information to the Gojek Bandung Community Facebook group, which was subsequently disseminated via WhatsApp, is categorized as misleading false information. Unfortunately, it is still difficult to stem the information that has already spread and poisoned people's minds. In the end, many people believe more in false information and ignore the existing reality (Pillai & Fazio, 2021).

Whatsapp is the most widely used social media platform in different circles, including Indonesia. This condition ultimately sets WhatsApp as the media that spreads false information and hate speech (Cahyani, 2019). Moreover, shared fraud, misuse of religious arguments, infidelity, and various inappropriate information also became viral news widely spread through WhatsApp (Yuliani & Riadi, 2019). The false information is spread out through groups (Garimella & Eckles, 2020), young people who consume viral information without any selection (Sánchez García, 2021), women who tend to prioritize emotions (Ilahi, 2019), and ordinary people who do not understand how to detect the truth of information (Godwin, 2021). WhatsApp users generally position themselves as informants who can actively share various forms and types of information (Sánchez García, 2021). Unsurprisingly, there was an infodemic in the community, an excess of either quality or quantity information.

Even amid the sloping condition of the COVID-19 case, false information circulates on various social media. As if it doesn't want to stop, it continues to be an easy ground for developing incorrect information. With the massive amount of information circulating on social media, every effort has been made to limit and prevent the spread of false information. Various literature as a result of the research was written and published, including Rahman's article, *Peranan Pemerintah Kabupaten Situbondo Dalam Menanggulangi Informasi Hoax* (The Role of the Situbondo Regency Government in Overcoming Hoax Information). He explained the Situbondo Regency government strategy for tackling false information. It was explained that hoaxes would be nothing if their spread were not assisted by the media, especially Facebook and WhatsApp. Therefore, the Situbondo Communication and Information Office needs to optimize its main task to clarify news, commonly called *debunk* (Rahman & Taufiq, 2020). Zain also wrote about the strategy of eradicating false information, namely through the technology learning process. A teacher must provide direction to students to manage information so they can be alert and avoid spreading false information (Zain, 2019).

There have been numerous studies on the spread of false information and Hadith. However, as far as the researchers have observed, there are at least two categories of research. The first category pertains to research on social media as a medium for disseminating false information (Apuke & Omar, 2021; Buchanan, 2020; Han & Mehta, 2019). In this category, social media is considered one of the fastest mediums for spreading fake news (Han & Mehta, 2019), and the motivation behind individuals spreading fake news is driven by altruistic behavior (Apuke & Omar, 2021). The second category is research on Islamic ethics concerning communication (Khalil, 2016; Mowlana, 2013; Sadig, 2017). Sadig

(2017) states that Islamic communication ethics is based on truth, honesty, and social care principles. Mowlana (2013) stated that ethics in the Islamic world is based on the inseparability of religion and society, so information in Islamic ethics is not a commodity but a moral obligation. Among these two categories, no specific research analyzes communication ethics on social media based on Hadith, especially concerning the spread of fake news about COVID-19.

This study aims to investigate and assess the spread of a large amount of false information related to COVID-19 on behalf of Hadith through the WhatsApp platform in Indonesia. The researchers identify the types of false information using hadith claims, analyze the dissemination pattern of such false information, and analyze its impact on society. In addition, through the analysis of related hadiths, this research also aims to formulate appropriate communication ethics in using WhatsApp based on the teachings of Hadith. Thus, this study is expected to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon of spreading false information related to COVID-19 in the name of Hadith through WhatsApp, as well as provide guidelines for communication ethics based on Islamic values in using the platform.

The use of the hadith method in this research is crucial because the Hadith is a significant source of Islamic law and carries an authority that is recognized by Muslims worldwide. In the context of spreading false information, the Hadith provides guidance on communicating and receiving information correctly and honestly. It emphasizes the importance of being cautious in disseminating unverified information. By utilizing the hadith method, this research makes a distinctive and crucial contribution to understanding communication ethics in Islam and how it can be implemented to prevent the spread of fake news on social media. It is crucial because the dissemination of false information can be detrimental to society and could trigger social conflicts.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *WhatsApp*

WhatsApp is a free cross-platform instant messaging application that utilizes Voice over I.P. (VoIP) technology. At the beginning of its emergence, WhatsApp was only used to communicate and share information between family members and friends (Godwin, 2021). Furthermore, the existence of WhatsApp is not only used for informational purposes among certain circles (Sánchez García, 2021). The platform they have and the ease of operation are the reasons why WhatsApp is in demand by many people. Various forms of online news are connected to the WhatsApp application. It can lead someone to navigate to other related content, expand information, and disseminate or share it more quickly and easily. Thus, WhatsApp successfully becomes one of the applications with the most number of fans.

WhatsApp provides essential value to billions of people. Unfortunately, the spread of incorrect information through the WhatsApp application has become a direct cause of social unrest and violence in society (Garimella & Eckles, 2020). Even though WhatsApp is used for closed conversations, infodemic can still break down barriers and circulate widely. It is due to the competence of delivering and sharing news as if it were in every individual without exception. Almost all WhatsApp users feel they have the right to spread information without checking and rechecking first (Pujarama et al., 2020). No fewer users continue forwarding the content carelessly without seeing and checking whether the information is accurate or not. As a result, much information circulated confusingly. The sources are unclear and far from the truth.

As part of the world community, Indonesia is ranked high regarding the number of WhatsApp users. Indonesia was recorded among the highest consumption of WhatsApp in the world (Susanti & Suyudi, 2020). Indonesia is also a country with the highest level of false news spreading. When the pandemic hit in 2020, false information increased from 1,221 to 2,024 daily. In response, WhatsApp has tried to limit the spread of false information by restricting the forward feature to only five accounts simultaneously. However, these efforts have not reached the minimum number yet compared to the total Indonesian WhatsApp users, who exceed 80% of the total 143 Million internet users (Susilo & Putranto, 2018).

### *False Information*

False information is a form of lying. It usually aims to entertain, fool, and deceive. The public knows it more as hoaxes (Maulana, 2017). It is generally in the form of sensational content that turns into just a lie. People are used to focusing on spectacular information, whether it has actual value or not. Likewise, with the massive development of technology, false information circulates at lightning speed. The phenomenon that causes perfect reproduction is in line with what people believe. It has the power to go viral on a large scale. Information is taken for granted with confidence without presenting evidence and verification.

False information widely spread on social media is packaged in various forms, each of which will be adjusted to the purpose of the news writer wants to describe (Sitepu, Harahap, & Trimurni, 2021). Some of these are in the form of rumours described as statements of unverified information, circulate on important topics, arise in ambiguous situations, pose threats, or are potential threats. Rumours overgrow where people don't have access to accurate information (Godwin, 2021).

The phenomenon of false information will always exist in society. Even in this post-truth era, it exists. It is a concept characteristic of the 21st century in which many information and communication media are far from being "good." Today's human society lives in a culture that emphasizes highlighting information. They tend to focus more on showing information by grabbing the attention of others and often seek to increase the number of visit to digital content regardless of its truth value. Information only focuses on suggestive aspects and popularity without regard to credibility.

### *Hadith Perspective*

Hadith includes all the words, deeds, characteristics, and approval of the prophet that must be followed. Based on this definition, Hadith is divided into four forms: *qaulan* or words, *fi'lan* or deeds, *sifatan* consisting of physical and non-physical characters, and *taqriran* or determinations (Mares & Turvey, 2018). In Islam, the existence of Hadith is a way of life that must be followed. Undoubtedly, it is allowed to imitate whatever is exemplified by the prophet. Especially in creed, worship and law, there is no choice but to follow precisely. It is because even though the Messenger of Allah is also human, he is "infallible"- he is protected from errors in conveying religion (Uroko & Enobong, 2020). If the prophet made a mistake, Allah immediately corrected it and explained it compassionately (Al-Quran, Surah Fath 48:28).

Because of its importance, Hadith is written and memorized by Muslims from generation to generation. History has recorded that many figures, scholars, ulama, and the general public have written, studied, and taught Hadith enthusiastically (Susanti & Suyudi, 2020). With full awareness, they set Hadith as basic knowledge to answer various world problems, especially provisions for the afterlife. What is in the Hadith becomes an explanation for the Qur'an in all aspects of life? From the most abstract and general to the most concrete

and specific (Hariono, 2018). There are no small things; they are discussed in the Shari'a. Nothing is taboo, but it has been explained in the Qur'an and Hadith. The prophet explained that he had left two things to his people: the Book of Allah (Al-Qur'an) and Hadith; if they adhered to them, they would not go astray forever (HR Malik, 1594).

Hadith also explains communication as an inseparable part of human life. Even the Hadith itself is a form of freedom of communication given by Allah to His Messenger to reduce the verses of the Qur'an. Every human movement, action and thought is communication that expresses meaning. Communication provides value for oneself and others in various forms (Kreiss, Lawrence, & McGregor, 2020). From the perspective of Hadith, the process of sharing messages is framed by several methods as a guide that is presented so that all individuals can communicate well and effectively (Afwadzi, 2019).

### METHODOLOGY

This research uses the content analysis method (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992), which involves collecting information relevant to the research object virtually through the turnbackhoax.id application, before analyzing the data qualitatively. To ensure the research is focused, one research theme was identified, which is COVID-19, as it is still a relevant and active topic. The researchers extracted, grouped, and analyzed 270 WhatsApp messages containing false information about COVID-19 circulating in the community in the last three years, accordingly based on their content.

In the next stage, a qualitative constructivist study was conducted on various Hadith literature about communicating and sharing information. The hadith search was conducted using the book *Mu'jam mufahras li Alfadz Hadis al-Nabawi*, using the keywords "haddatsa" and "qaala" which means to say or tell, and several reputable hadiths related to the main theme of the study were found. Four important sub-themes were then identified from the search. The selection of the four traditions considered the credibility of the hadith narrators, with Al-Bukhari and Muslim being highly credible. The textual and contextual meanings of the Hadith were interpreted by analyzing the linguistic aspects, various scholars' opinions and relating them to various contemporary cases.

The next stage is to conduct a qualitative constructivist study of various literature on Hadith regarding how to communicate and share information. Through the thematic method, three hadiths that discussed communication were taken as the main theme of the research (see Table 1). Those hadiths came from narrators whose credibility was known. Then, the researchers identified the Hadith's textual and contextual meaning by analyzing linguistic aspects and various opinions of scholars and connecting them with different contemporary cases.

Table 1: Three selected traditions in the compilation of communication ethics in Islam

No.	Hadith Theme	Description
2.	Silence is the best choice for communicating	H.R. Al-Bukhari, number 6018 (Bukhari, 1997, pp. 38–39)
3.	Selectively sharing the information	H.R. Muslim, number 5 (Muslim, 2007, pp. 46–47)
4.	Conducting the investigation	Musnad Ahmad, number 25161 (Hanbal, 2010, pp. 282–285)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Variety of COVID-19 Fake News Information on WhatsApp*

False information circulates on WhatsApp in various forms. Not only in certain groups, it has been liked, downloaded many times, highly appreciated, become a reference, and got many stars from thousands of WhatsApp users. Yet, without realizing it, the existence of false information will harm society. People can pit, spread hatred, cause unrest, slander, and deceive. WhatsApp is used for sending messages and in gifts, voice calls, and video calls (Santos, Nunes, Reis, & de Carvalho, 2021). These benefits make it vulnerable to being used as media to spread false information.

As mentioned in the research method, based on the results of virtual observations through the turnbackhoax.id application, 217 WhatsApp messages were found to share false information about COVID-19 from early 2020 through 29 May 2022. Based on Table 1, the number of inaccurate information circulating in the early 2020 pandemic was 144 messages. This number exceeded half of the total false information that was successfully tracked during this study.

The content of the false information that dominates was more related to the impact of the pandemic on the economic, social, and religious sectors. Then, it is followed by false information related to government policies in response to the calamity that was engulfing the people of the country and the world at that time (see Table 2). Both are almost balanced, namely as many as 34 and 32 messages. The following three messages, mostly wrapped in falsehood, are information related to the distribution, treatment, and positive patient data, namely 14, 15, and 15 messages. As for other false information about understanding COVID-19, symptoms, services, task force, death toll, vaccines and masks, each did not reach 10.

Table 2: False information related to government policies during COVID-19

No	Message Content	Total
1.	The impact of the pandemic on the economic, social, and religious sectors	34
2.	The government policies in response to the calamity	32
3.	The distribution of ??	14
4.	The treatment	15
5.	The number of positive patient data	15

The nature of the message reflects the situation at that time because the community and the government were uncertain at the beginning of the pandemic, at the end of 2019. The community looks for and collects as much information as possible to find solutions to get out of the pandemic situation safely. Unfortunately, many people take advantage of this situation, seeking their benefits in a way that cannot be justified from any point of view (Pujarama et al., 2020).

In 2022, false information about COVID-19 decreased along with the increasing public understanding of COVID-19 and the discovery of solutions and countermeasures. However, the decline in numbers cannot be considered as the end of false information. It is proven that after two years of undergoing a pandemic, people still cannot believe 100 percent of the facts about COVID-19 and the policies made by the government. The people's need for government policies is like a child who needs protection from his parents. Likewise, the government needs full support and trust of the people so that they can think clearly to produce policies that can benefit the community.

In many cases, government policies are suspected and even linked to elements of Shari'a. Such is the procedure in the funeral procession for the bodies of positive COVID-19 patients. On his account Muh. Taufiq Hidayat narrated as in Figure 1.

.. A Muslim woman who died because of suspected COVID-19 at Sembiring General Hospital, Medan, was not buried according to the Shari'a. The corpse is still wearing a nightgown. At the end of the narration, it is written, "The most important thing is to get a target; the funds are disbursed #coronaProjectDisease".

Based on the search results of Tempo's CekFakta Team, it was stated that the information uploaded by Muh. Taufiq is false and misleading. The hospital has confirmed that the body was bathed before being shrouded and put in a coffin without removing the nightgown. It is guided by the MUI Fatwa Number 18 of 2020 regarding guidelines for managing corpses (*tajhiz al-jana'iz*), Muslims exposed to COVID-19, which can be bathed without taking off their clothes.



Figure 1: Fake news on COVID-19 positive corpse buried still wearing sleepwearis not in accordance with Islamic law

Source: <https://turnbackhoax.id/2020/07/28/salah-mayat-positif-Covid-19-dikuburkan-masih-menggunakan-daster-tidak-sesuai-dgn-syariat-fardhu-kifayah-islam>

It still revolves around the impact of government policies related to Shari'a. False information that had gone virally related to religion was about not holding Friday prayers at the Istiqlal mosque because the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) controlled the mosque (Figure 2). The PKI is not controlling the Istiqlal mosque. The decision was issued on 19 March 2020, following a decree from Governor Anies Baswedan that Friday prayers would be cancelled for two weeks to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Furthermore, the implementation of Friday prayers was limited, namely, with the internal scope of the Istiqlal Mosque employees.



Figure 2: Misleading content about Istiqlal Mosque that did not hold Friday prayers because of the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) control  
Source: <https://turnbackhoax.id/2021/01/06/salah-masjid-istiqlal-tidak-mengadakan-salat-jumat-karena-dikuasai-pki>

Even though government policies are still part of viral information content, the central issue seemed to have shifted to treatment and vaccines. It is understandable because regardless of the slightest public trust in the ferocity of COVID-19, efforts to protect oneself are still essential to know and implement. The message was repeatedly spread that COVID-19 could be overcome with some ingredients such as warm water, tea, salt, lemon juice, pumpkin, plasma donors, and other medicines bought and provided at home. As conveyed by a professor at the Department of Internal Medicine, FKUI, Ari Fahrial Syam, the mixture of these ingredients has not been medically proven to kill the COVID-19 virus and can even cause side effects for people with stomach problems. He also explained that until the news went viral, there was no effective drug for the COVID-19 virus. Viral information circulating through WhatsApp can be categorized as fake because it is not based on a reliable source.

Until 29 May 2022, false information regarding COVID-19 is quite worrying due to the news content disseminated, even though the number of messages did not reach 10. Misinformation regarding distrust of the existence of COVID-19 and its dangers still exists, although the community and government have collaborated. It's as if COVID-19 is a charade deliberately played on the earth of the Republic of Indonesia. Even worse, false information is being propagated in the name of Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X (Figure 3), a recognized national figure. According to reports, Sultan Hamengkubuwono X saw COVID-19 as a Chinese ruse that used individuals who had betrayed the Republic of Indonesia to launch asymmetrical strikes against the Indonesian Republic Army. Debt loans from China with high interest rates are like ammunition. The government allowed hundreds of Chinese to enter Indonesian territory freely while the natives were tightened with vaccines, masks, and rapid tests. There are Regime games with fabrication findings showing the elderly to babies exposed to COVID-19 using test kits that have been modified and set up by the Republic of Indonesia's betrayers. The vaccine is regarded as the PRC's weapon to eradicate the Indonesian people subtly. There



is no guarantee of a vaccine. The dead, including those vaccinated and traveling among provinces, still require rapid tests.



Figure 3: Fake news about Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X thinks COVID-19 is a charade  
Source: <https://turnbackhoax.id/2022/02/05/salah-sri-sultan-hamengku-buwono-x-menganggap-Covid-19-sandiwara-di-bumi-nkri/>

This false information has been circulating since July 2021 and went viral again on 5 February, 2022. The Yogyakarta Government has clarified that the claim cannot be justified through the Humasjogja Instagram account. The Yogyakarta Government also urges them to exercise restraint, not to create false information or believe it without confirming it from a reliable source.

#### *Islamic Communication Ethics in Using WhatsApp*

##### *a) Silence is Better than Communicating False Information*

As an important organ used in communication, the tongue is only a tiny object compared to other human body parts but has a large capacity far beyond its size. The tongue can damage one's entire body and other people's. The tongue represents speech. The point of the expression is that a talk can damage a person's physical and psychic (Carozzi, 2019). This

phenomenon happened to a teenager with the initials R.M (18 years) on 6 October 2021. RM became a victim who died after being stabbed with a sharp weapon after an argument broke out at Jalan Palupuh Raya, Tegal Gundil Village, North Bogor District, Bogor City (Zakaria, 2021). Ultimately, a minor issue that can not be appropriately conveyed becomes a cause of conflict and death. Slipping the tongue has led to the catastrophe of the world and the hereafter.

Three methods of communicating well with fellow humans are found based on the Hadith that has been successfully traced. The first is not to accept false information or even disseminate it. The prophet Muhammad said:

Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him say good or be silent  
... (Bukhari, 1997, pp. 38–39).

The words that come from someone's mouth will cause a positive or negative reaction from those who hear them. Words spoken without considering goodness and benefit can cause great harm. Therefore, talking or being silent is a choice that must be carefully considered beforehand (Pedraja & Sawtell, 2021). It is not easy to be wise between the two options. It can only be done by people who have faith.

Faith closely attached to a Muslim's soul makes him always feel supervised by Allah. It results in shame and fear of making mistakes, including negligence in keeping the tongue. The essence of verbal guarding behaviour is to exercise God's rights and respect fellow human beings. The hurts caused by the mouth are more difficult to heal than wounds on the skin surface. So, every individual must protect themselves from mistakes made in verbal language. The Hadith explained methods to maintain verbal language: saying good or, if you can't afford it, then being silent. There are only two choices. There is no choice other than these two. Although silence is lower than saying good things, silence is much better than saying bad things.

Allah explains three things related to goodness in words: *sadaqah*, *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (commanding good and forbidding evil), and words that bring goodness to humans (Al-Quran, 4:114). Apart from these three types of speech, it is not considered a good word. Especially if the words have no source, are fake and cannot be justified (Zhao & Epley, 2020). Man is forbidden to follow it because what he hears, sees and keeps in his heart will be held accountable (Al-Quran, 17:36). The use of the WhatsApp application to spread false information does not get legality from Islamic sharia. False information shared on online media such as WhatsApp is part of communication that must follow the proper communication ethics. People can still communicate through the WhatsApp application accountably in the afterlife. No false information is conveyed apart from Allah's supervision because there is no human speech except a guardian angel near him (Al-Quran, 50:18).

#### *b) Selectively Sharing Information*

In this advanced digital age, communication through the WhatsApp platform has become an important part of our daily lives. However, with the speed and ease of sharing information through WhatsApp, we must remember proper communication etiquette. One crucial aspect of WhatsApp communication etiquette is selectively sharing information. It means we should choose wisely the information we share with others, ascertain its veracity, and consider its impact before disseminating. By sharing information selectively, we can help prevent the

spread of false information, avoid conflict, and maintain the integrity of our communications in a digital era full of diverse and often unverified information.

Ubayd Allah bin Mu'ādh al-Anbarī narrated to us, my father narrated to us; and Muhammad bin ul-Muthannā narrated to us, Abd ur-Rahman bin Mahdī both narrated to us: 'Shu'bah narrated to us, on authority of Khubayb bin Abd ir-Rahman, on authority of Hafs bin Āsim, on authority of Abī Hurayrah, he said, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah upon him, said: 'It is enough of a lie for a man to narrate everything he 'hears' (Muslim, 2007, pp. 46–47).

In maintaining the integrity of communication, Islam teaches the importance of sorting and selecting information before sharing it with others. A Muslim is expected to take three important steps before conveying the information received. First, clarifying or *tabayyun* the truth of the information. A Muslim must ensure that the information to be disseminated is correct and has been verified. Second, realizing that not all news is true news. In receiving information, a Muslim must be wise and selective, not spreading any information heard without sufficient verification. Lastly, responsible for the shared information. A Muslim is fully responsible for the shared information. Ignorance is not an excuse to abdicate responsibility. A Muslim must understand the impact of the information to be disseminated and maintain the integrity of communication by conveying only true and useful information. In this case, it is the responsibility of every Muslim to seek the truth before conveying information to others. By doing so, a Muslim can maintain communication integrity and prevent the spread of false information that may cause problems in the future.

Among man's bad communication habits is hearing truths and lies simultaneously, so talking about everything he hears can lead to false behaviour (Mares & Turvey, 2018). Unnoticed lying could be that the heard and disseminated information is incorrect. It does not happen or contradict the truth. Caution is needed in hearing, especially to convey the information heard.

Before researching information and ascertaining the benefits, it is not good to share the information (Smith, 2020). It also includes information via WhatsApp. It should not be trusted immediately or even disseminated. The information may have been added or subtracted from what happened. Even an authentic hadith will be reduced to *daif* (weak) if the following narration adds or removes various elements.

An obligation that has been regulated by religion when someone has reached a certain age is required to be able to keep his mouth from all words except words that contain benefits. He should be silent even when the impact is balanced between speaking or not because information can essentially lead to words that are permissible, *makruh* and even make them unlawful. The same information but shared repeatedly will give birth to ideas for making changes that show the novelty side and highlight the identity of the news presenter so that they are trapped in news manipulation and conveying false information. In addition, repeated information delivery leads to backbiting behaviour, interfering in matters that are not their business, *namimah* (compost), which can lead to conflict and bloodshed. False information related to government policies and public figures can provoke the public to take actions that endanger and damage security stability (Kusuma, 2019).

*c) Conducting Investigations*

In today's digital era, the widespread use of WhatsApp as a means of communication has made it easy to share information. However, to maintain good communication ethics, it is important for WhatsApp users to conduct investigations before disseminating information to others. Islam teaches the importance of honesty and truth in communication. By investigating first, WhatsApp users can ensure the validity and accuracy of the information to be disseminated, thus avoiding sharing false information that can mislead and harm others. Through this action, we can carry out our responsibility as responsible Muslims in disseminating useful and true information to fellow WhatsApp users.

There is a story in the Hadith in Musnad Imam Ahmad No. 18371 (2010, pp. 282–285) about Al-Haris, who came to the prophet Muhammad to convert to Islam and pay zakat. After accepting the prophet's call, Al-Haris planned to invite people in his community to convert to Islam and pay zakat. He promised to collect their zakat and send it to the prophet through a messenger.

However, when the time to send it arrived, the prophet's messenger had not arrived. Al-Haris was worried and gathered the rich people in his community to go to the Messenger of Allah himself. However, the prophet met the messenger on the way, who informed him that Al-Haris refused to pay zakat and would even kill him. It made the prophet angry and sent troops to arrest Al-Haris.

However, when Al-Haris and his friends met with the prophet's troops, he firmly denied the allegations. When Al-Haris met the Messenger again, he explained that he had never seen the messenger and was afraid that the messenger's delay would anger Allah and His Messenger. This story reminds us of the importance of verifying information before relaying it further to avoid getting caught up in spreading false news or untrue accusations.

This Hadith then led to the revelation of the verse in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 6, which reminds the believers to check the veracity of the news brought by the ungodly before relaying it further.

O ye who believe! if an unrighteous person brings you any news, ascertain the correctness of the report fully, lest you harm a people in ignorance, and then become repentant for what you have done (Al-Quran, 49:6).

WhatsApp is a virtual communication tool that helps people in many ways, such as communicating, interacting, sharing information, and expressing themselves. The rapid development of technology makes the exchange of information more accessible and faster. Like it or not, this condition causes people to be involved in the rapid flow of information. There is no reason to avoid it. They need a wise strategy to respond to and clarify the news before believing the statement. The concrete step is not to rush; look for cross-information and check the source. Furthermore, if the information is accurate, it is necessary to consider whether or not there are benefits when it is disseminated.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, we have analysed the spread of false information about COVID-19 on WhatsApp and Hadith regarding its case. The findings show that WhatsApp is one of the social media that is often used to spread false information. Based on the Hadith perspective, Islam provides clear guidance on communication ethics, one of which is in using WhatsApp. Hadith formulates that silence is better than conveying false information; sharing Information

selectively and conducting investigation are steps that must be followed to prevent the spread of false information. By applying proper communication ethics in using WhatsApp and other platforms, a Muslim can play an active role in combating the spread of false information and building a more honest and responsible communication environment.

Although this research has provided valuable insights into the spread of false information related to COVID-19 through WhatsApp attributed to Hadith, several limitations must be considered. This research only focuses on the Indonesian context and a specific time. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be directly applied to different contexts or times. In addition, although a qualitative analysis of the classified WhatsApp messages has been conducted, this research has not involved a more in-depth analysis of the impact and consequences of spreading false information.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct a broader study involving a larger and more diverse sample. In addition, it is also important to involve quantitative analysis to measure the extent of the spread of false information through WhatsApp and its impact on society. Research could also involve surveys or interviews to get WhatsApp users' perspectives on communication ethics and the spread of false information. In addition, future research could involve social network mapping on WhatsApp to understand the pattern of the spread of false information and identify the main source of the spread of false information. Thus, future research can provide a more comprehensive understanding and effective solutions to address the spread of false information through WhatsApp.

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