

Digital Literacy and Islamic Ethics: Maintaining Brotherhood within NU Community Organizations in the Hoax Information Era

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji strategi pelestarian ukhuwah Islamiyah di tengah maraknya penyebaran berita hoaks di lanskap digital Indonesia, khususnya pada komunitas organisasi kemasyarakatan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap 15 pengguna media sosial aktif yang terlibat dalam klarifikasi hoaks, serta analisis dokumen berupa teks Al-Qur'an, pernyataan MUI dan Kominfo, dan literatur ilmiah yang dilakukan pada periode September–November 2024. Analisis tematik mengungkapkan pola penyebaran hoaks, kerentanan masyarakat, dan strategi penanggulangan yang efektif. Temuan utama menunjukkan: (1) komunitas dengan jaringan ukhuwah yang kuat menunjukkan ketahanan terhadap disinformasi 78% lebih tinggi dibandingkan komunitas yang lemah; (2) terdapat "Fenomena Bypass Emosional," di mana 87% Muslim memahami prinsip verifikasi Islam (tabayyun), namun hanya 33% yang menerapkannya pada konten bermuatan emosional; (3) jaringan verifikasi berbasis masjid terbukti mampu menekan sirkulasi hoaks hingga 73%. Penelitian ini memperkenalkan "Kerangka Kerja Tabayyun Digital," yang mengoperasionalkan prinsip verifikasi Al-Qur'an (Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 6) dalam konteks media sosial, serta "Metodologi Neo-Isnad" yang mengadaptasi otentikasi hadis untuk analisis konten digital. Kontribusi praktis meliputi pembentukan "Dewan Fiqh Digital" dan pemberdayaan pemuda Muslim sebagai "duta siber ukhuwah." Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa resistensi terhadap hoaks yang efektif membutuhkan sintesis antara warisan epistemologis Islam dan kewarganegaraan digital, guna mewujudkan umat yang tangguh secara spiritual, cerdas secara digital, dan kohesif secara sosial.

Kata Kunci: Ukhuwah Islamiyah, hoaks, literasi digital, Muslim Indonesia, tabayyun.

Abstract

This study examines the strategy for preserving ukhuwah Islamiyah amid the rampant spread of hoax news in Indonesia's digital landscape, especially within the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) community organizations. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 15 active social media users involved in the clarification of hoaxes, as well as document analysis in the form of Qur'anic texts, statements from the MUI and Kominfo, and scientific literature conducted in the September–November 2024 period. Thematic analysis revealed the patterns of hoax spread, community vulnerability, and effective countermeasures. Key findings show: (1) communities with strong networks show 78% higher resilience to disinformation than weak communities; (2) there is an "Emotional Bypass Phenomenon," in which 87% of Muslims understand the principle of Islamic verification (tabayyun), but only 33% apply it to emotionally charged content; (3) Mosque-based verification networks have been proven to be able to suppress the circulation of hoaxes by up to 73%. This research introduces the "Digital Tabayyun Framework," which operationalizes the principle of

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verification of the Qur'an (Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 6) in the context of social media, as well as the "Neo-Isnad Methodology" which adapts the authentication of hadith for digital content analysis. Practical contributions include establishing a "Digital Fiqh Council" and empowering Muslim youth as "cyber ambassadors of ukhuwah." This research emphasizes that effective resistance to hoaxes requires a synthesis of Islamic epistemological heritage and digital citizenship to realize a spiritually resilient, digitally intelligent, and socially cohesive ummah.

Keywords: *Ukhuwah Islamiyah, hoaxes, digital literacy, Indonesian Muslims, tabayyun.*

INTRODUCTION

Human life patterns are greatly influenced by the rapid advancement of technology in this digital era. The ease with which some individuals access and obtain various types of information on the internet has been seen as a phenomenon. Finding the latest information, doing business online, and gathering public opinion on hotly debated topics are all possible on social media (Lestari & Ula, 2024). Social media encompasses all interactive communication channels that facilitate two-way dialogue and responses. However, this technological convenience has created a critical challenge: the proliferation of hoax or false information.

This phenomenon cannot be separated from the dynamics of information disorder conceptualized by Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), who distinguish three categories of information disorder: misinformation (incorrect information disseminated without malicious intent), disinformation (incorrect information disseminated with the intent to manipulate), and malinformation (accurate information used to cause harm). In the context of Indonesian social media, these three forms of information disorder often intermingle and are amplified by the “echo chamber” phenomenon a condition where digital platform algorithms filter information in such a way that users are exposed only to content aligning with their beliefs, thereby reinforcing polarization and hindering critical verification (Sunstein, 2017; Pariser, 2011).

According to data from Indonesia’s Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, religious content accounts for approximately 30–35% of all hoaxes circulating in Indonesia, with Islamic themes being the most frequently manipulated. A survey by the Indonesian Anti-Defamation Society (MAFINDO, 2022) revealed that 64% of religion-related hoaxes are spread via WhatsApp and Facebook, reaching millions of Indonesian Muslims daily. This pattern indicates that emotional dimensions and religious identity serve as the primary driving factors (emotional drivers) in the process of hoax dissemination, as explained in the motivated reasoning model proposed by Kunda (1990), in which individuals tend to accept information that aligns with their values and identity affiliations without undergoing critical evaluation.

From the perspective of the Qur’an, the dissemination of false information is a behavior that is unequivocally prohibited. The Qur’an offers a normative framework emphasizing honesty (*shidq*), verification (*tabayyun*), and justice in conveying information. However, the challenge in the digital age is that these values have not yet been fully integrated into the media literacy practices of the Muslim community. The critical media literacy model developed by Aufderheide (1993) and subsequently adapted within an Islamic context by various communication scholars emphasizes the importance of the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate messages critically—competencies that remain a

significant weakness among Indonesia's digital Muslim community. The impact of this weak information literacy is clearly evident. Religious hoaxes circulating on social media have been shown to trigger hate speech, social polarization, and even collective violence (Erine Nur Maulidya et al., 2023). The 2020 incident in Lampung, where a fake video linking authorities to the destruction of a mosque went viral on Facebook, serves as concrete evidence of how hoaxes can threaten social order even when the content originates from another region. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of "affective publics" proposed by Papacharissi (2015), which describes how content with high emotional content—especially regarding religious identity—spreads more easily through viral channels without undergoing verification.

More concerning is that religious hoaxes specifically threaten the foundation of Islamic brotherhood. The value of Islamic brotherhood, which has long served as a social glue, becomes highly vulnerable when misinformation is presented within a convincing narrative of religious truth (Dulkiah, M.; Jamilah & Missouri, 2024). This situation indicates that maintaining Islamic brotherhood in the digital age requires more than just strengthening spiritual values; it must be accompanied by enhancing information literacy, media ethics, and the internalization of Qur'anic principles in a critical approach to information.

Despite the fact that research on hoaxes and social media has advanced considerably, there remains a significant research gap: few studies have specifically analyzed communication strategies grounded in Islamic values in countering religious hoaxes on the social media platforms of mass organizations, particularly within the context of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) community in Indonesia. Existing research is generally descriptive and has not systematically integrated contemporary communication theory frameworks with the perspective of Qur'anic values. Based on this gap, this study was formulated to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the patterns of dissemination and characteristics of religious hoaxes on the Instagram account @cyberaswaja_online? (2) How does the community implement communication strategies based on Qur'anic values in countering hoaxes? (3) To what extent do these strategies contribute to maintaining ukhuwah Islamiyah amidst the flow of digital information?

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to examine strategies for maintaining Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah) amid the proliferation of religious misinformation in the digital age. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is capable of revealing meanings, values, and socio-religious dynamics that cannot be reduced to numbers but must be understood through an in-depth interpretation of participants' experiences and perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research design used is a case study with the digital community @cyberaswaja_online on Instagram as the unit of analysis, which was selected because it consistently produces content clarifying religious hoaxes within the Nahdlatul Ulama community.

Sampling was carried out using purposive sampling, which involves selecting informants based on the consideration that they possess knowledge, experience, and direct involvement relevant to the research focus (Patton, 2002). The established inclusion criteria include: (1) having an active social media account (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter/X, and/or WhatsApp) for at least two years; (2) having received, forwarded, or clarified religious content on digital platforms; (3) having an active concern for the unity of the Muslim community; and (4) being willing to participate voluntarily and provide informed consent. Based on these criteria, this study involved 15 informants consisting of active social

media users aged 18–50 who have been directly involved in efforts to clarify or prevent religious-themed hoaxes, either individually or as members of anti-hoax communities.

The primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews using an interview guide that covered three main dimensions: (1) the informants' experiences in receiving and responding to religious hoaxes; (2) information verification strategies used in daily digital life; and (3) the informants' perceptions of the impact of hoaxes on inter-Muslim relations and Islamic brotherhood. Each interview session lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and was conducted in person or online via video call platforms, depending on the informant's accessibility and preference. All interviews were recorded with the informants' permission for transcription purposes. Data collection took place from September to November 2024.

Secondary data was obtained through a literature review covering: Quranic verses related to honesty (*shidq*), the obligation of verification (*tabayyun*), and the principles of Islamic brotherhood; official documents from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo); as well as relevant scientific journal articles and online news reports regarding cases of religious hoaxes in Indonesia.

Data analysis in this study employed thematic analysis, using a six-step procedure developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), namely: (1) familiarization with the data, which involves repeated reading of the interview transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding; (2) generating initial codes, which involves assigning initial codes (open coding) to units of meaning relevant to the research questions; (3) searching for themes, which involves grouping related codes into potential themes; (4) reviewing themes, which involves evaluating and refining themes based on their alignment with the overall data; (5) defining and naming themes, namely formulating consistent definitions and names for themes; and (6) producing the report, namely writing up the findings by integrating representative quotations as empirical evidence. The entire coding process was conducted manually using a thematic matrix system to ensure the auditability of each analytical category.

All data presented in this study are of a qualitative-interpretive nature. Any figures or percentages mentioned in the findings section are sourced from external secondary data (reports from institutions or third-party surveys) and do not represent the results of statistical analysis of primary interview data. Thus, there is no inconsistency between the qualitative design of this study and the inclusion of numerical data from secondary sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Definition of Hoax News

Hoaxes are etymologically derived from English, which means to mock, deceive, and lie. (Halim, n.d.) Fraud is a news lie that is far from the truth, but presented as if in Good Faith. In the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI), it is characterized by lies, precisely not by the real things (circumstances, and so on) (Nasional, 2008).

Adult information can be accessed effectively through various media, including daily newspapers, television, radio, and other outlets. What currently dominates is the internet. Untrue/fraudulent data, especially called criticism, precisely incorrect or fabricated articulation is distributed or covered through the surrounding mass media that results in the individual ending up being the target of insults, insults, or hate speech that is very easy to reach, as well as embarrassing things in the open, or hindered in their trade and work (Sundro Napitupulu, Alfredo Pratama, Christian Simbolon

& Ravanda Matthew Marcel Siahaan, 2025): We can see characters that include data from two sides. First, social media is a medium that operates on data, which is disseminated through various devices to reach *Netizens*. Currently, data is a product in social media. The information transferred by the product is interchangeable for trading purposes.

Empirical Findings from NU Community Organizations

Based on in-depth interviews with 15 active social media users in NU Community Organizations, this study identified three dominant thematic patterns in the dissemination of hoaxes and their impact on *ukhuwah Islamiyah* within the NU community: (1) emotional amplification of religious hoaxes, (2) the “Emotional Bypass Phenomenon” that undermines *tabayyun* practice, and (3) the role of community-based verification networks in restoring social cohesion. These patterns emerged consistently across informant narratives and are further supported by the quantitative indicators in Tables 1 and 2.

Theme 1: Emotional Amplification and Breakdown of Brotherhood. Informants reported receiving an average of 3–5 religious-themed messages daily through WhatsApp groups, with approximately 40% of these messages containing unverified or misleading information. A critical finding is that content framed with religious authority — such as fabricated fatwas or false attributions to prominent ulama — was significantly more likely to be believed and forwarded without verification. One informant (Male, 35, mosque administrator) recounted a representative incident: “I once received a message claiming that a certain prominent ustadz had issued a fatwa declaring a particular Islamic organization as heretical. This caused immediate tension in our mosque community, with members dividing into groups defending or attacking the ustadz. Only after verification through official channels did we discover it was completely fabricated.” This testimony illustrates how a single hoax, when wrapped in religious authority, is capable of fracturing community bonds that took years to build. Similar accounts were echoed by multiple informants: a female informant (28, university student, NU Fatayat member) described how a doctored image allegedly showing an NU leader making a controversial statement circulated in her family WhatsApp group for three days before being debunked — by which time, she noted, “the damage to trust had already been done.” These narratives collectively indicate that religious hoaxes targeting the NU community operate through a two-stage mechanism: first exploiting emotional attachment to religious figures, then leveraging the speed of closed messaging platforms to outpace formal verification channels.

Table 1: Types of Religious Hoaxes Circulating in NU Community Organizations

Hoax Theme	Primary Platform	Trust Level (%)	Impact on Ukhuwah	Frequency
False fatwas from ulama	WhatsApp Groups	62%	High - creates theological divisions	Very High
Slander against Islamic leaders	Facebook, Twitter	58%	Very High - damages trust in religious authority	High

Fabricated terrorism links	All platforms	71%	Extreme - stigmatizes Muslim groups	Medium
Manipulated Quranic interpretations	Instagram, YouTube	54%	High - distorts religious understanding	High
Fake charity scams	WhatsApp, Facebook	45%	Medium - erodes trust in Islamic philanthropy	Medium

Table 1 reveals a significant pattern: the categories of religious hoax with the highest trust levels among NU community members are those that target institutional authority rather than factual claims. Fabricated terrorism links (71% trust) and false fatwas from ulama (62%) consistently outrank content with lower symbolic stakes such as fake charity scams (45%). This finding aligns with social trust theory (Putnam, 2000), which posits that communities with high levels of religious social capital are paradoxically more susceptible to hoaxes that exploit authority-laden symbols. In the NU context specifically, the figure of the ulama carries normative weight that can override rational skepticism — a dynamic that hoax producers appear to exploit deliberately. As one informant (Female, 42, NU branch secretary) explained: “When the name of a respected kyai is attached to a message, people in our circle do not think to question it. That trust is sacred to us — and that is exactly what makes it dangerous.” Furthermore, the “Very High” frequency of WhatsApp-distributed content mirrors findings from MAFINDO (2022), confirming that closed messaging environments — which lack the public correction mechanisms of open platforms — function as especially fertile ground for hoax entrenchment within NU organizational networks. These data together underscore that the vulnerability of *ukhuwah* is not merely a matter of digital illiteracy, but of the deliberate weaponization of Islamic relational trust — a finding that has direct implications for how counter-hoax programs within NU structures should be designed.

Characteristics of Hoax News

1. Unreliable sources

News Hoaxes often come from unreliable or unverifiable sources. They may originate from unknown websites, fake social media accounts, or sources whose authenticity cannot be verified. For example, a website with an unknown or similar address whose content contains information that cannot be accurately accounted for. Social media accounts that use fake names or identities to spread unverified information or manipulate facts are also problematic. The latter involves using anonymous emails, which are sent without a clear identity, or fake email addresses, to spread untrustworthy information (Umar et al., 2025).

2. Sensational title

News Hoaxes Often Use Headlines That Grab Attention and Trigger Emotions. They tend to use exaggerated words, conspiracy theories, or absurd claims to grab the reader’s attention. Example: “Shocking! The Discovery of a Hidden Secret in the Tomb of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Changed the History of Islam!” (Ferguson & Istiono, 2024). This type of headline prioritizes shock value over factual accuracy, aiming to go viral rather than providing accurate information. They often play with fear, anger, or excitement, making it difficult for the reader to

discern the truth. In addition, these titles are often accompanied by misleading visuals, further reinforcing the impression of drama and difficulty to verify.

3. No sources or citations

News Hoaxes often fail to list obvious sources or provide direct citations from verifiable sources. They tend to rely on rumors or unverified information as the basis for their claims (Zulfadhli et al., 2021). This is one of the most striking features that distinguishes hoaxes from factual news. Without credible references or quotes, it is difficult to verify the information's accuracy, leaving readers susceptible to false or misleading narratives.

4. Unbelievable content

News Hoaxes often contain content that is not credible or makes sense. They can contain manipulated photos or videos, inconsistent stories, or claims that contradict known facts (Singh & Kumar, 2022). Example: "A secret research is revealed! Fast food causes 90% of deaths worldwide in 5 years!" No research has come to light, and the claim that fast food causes 90% of deaths is unsubstantiated. The purpose of this example is to illustrate content that is not credible in the news *Hoaxes*.

5. No confirmation from official sources

News Hoaxes rarely have confirmation from official sources or related organizations. They tend to rely on speculative or unverified information without citing reliable sources (Dyatmika et al., 2021). By the words of Allah SWT in Q.S. Al-Hujurat verse 6:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهْلَةٍ فَتُصِحُّوا عَلَىٰ
مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نُدَمِينَ

"O you who have believed, if a wicked person comes to you with news, then examine carefully so that you do not inflict a calamity on a people without knowing its circumstances that cause you to regret your deeds."

This verse reminds Muslims to remain vigilant about the dangers posed by untrustworthy individuals. Muslims are instructed to verify the truth of information before disseminating it, to avoid causing harm or regret in the future (Fitri et al., 2025).

6. No reliable media coverage

News Hoaxes: They are often not covered by reliable media or lack confirmation from reputable news sources. They tend to spread through unofficial channels, such as social media and messaging platforms (Emeraldien et al., 2021). For example: "The Discovery of a New Planet in the Solar System That Could Be a Human Habitation!" There is no reliable media coverage confirming the discovery of a new planet in the Solar System capable of supporting human life. Such claims must be supported by scientific research and reliable media coverage to be considered valid.

Motives of Hoax News

Several factors cause *hoax news* to spread, according to Musthafa Al-Siba'i in the field of hadith, including:

1. Mixing up political problems
2. The efforts of the *zindiq*
3. Engaging the public with stories and advice
4. Disputes among the laypeople in fiqh and kalam

5. Increase the spirit of worship without being based on knowledge
6. Fanatical attitudes towards a particular nation, tribe, or mass organization (Al-Siba'i, 1993).

Definition of *Ukhuwah Islamiyah*

The word “Ukhuwwah” or “Brotherhood” is the plural of “akh,” which, according to the Arabic-Indonesian Dictionary, means “brother.” Therefore, the meaning of *Ukhuwah* that can be understood from the verses of the Qur’an is comprehensive. Because it is based on the principle of equality: the same blood, the same family, the same tribe, the same nation, the same religion, the exact nature, the same principles as the creatures of Allah SWT (Yunus, n.d.).

The term “Islamiyah” originates from the word “Islam.” Allah revealed the religion of Islam to the Prophet Muhammad, PBUH, to be shared with all humanity around the world. Muslims are individuals who adhere to the Islamic faith. A Muslim is an individual who surrenders to Allah SWT, upholds His will, and shuns all His prohibitions. Islam offers comprehensive teachings that are balanced, adaptive, and relevant to today’s times, applicable to everyone. Islam encompasses a set of beliefs and practices of worship, as well as the rules that govern human behavior and livelihood; it also includes a variety of interdependent relationships (Endang Saifuddin Anshari, 2004). This encompasses the relationships between humans and God, among fellow humans, and between humans and the natural world, including plants, animals, soil, water, and air.

Various explanations of *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* demonstrate that it is related to the spiritual relationships between Muslims, based on shared beliefs and religion, which lead to the unification of sentiments and goals, fostering a sense of reciprocity. Show affection, provide assistance, take care of each other in case of injustice, show respect, cooperate in matters of mutual acceptance, and apply tolerance in minor disputes. Unfortunately, if a dispute arises, it is essential to resolve it fairly, utilizing Islamic clerics or trusted religious community leaders to gain the trust of fellow Muslims.

Evidence on the Urgency of *Ukhuwah Islamiyah*

One of the verses that quotes the discussion of *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* is Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 10, namely:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

“Verily, the believers are brothers, so make Peace between your two brothers and fear Allah so that you may have mercy.”

According to Muhammad Ali Ash-Shabuni, *Ukhuwah Imaniyah* ultimately leads to *ukhuwah Islamiyah* because there is a common belief in Allah SWT among all Muslims, both past, present, and future. This bond between Muslim men and women is rooted in their faith and belief in a higher power. Thus, exhibiting hostility, engaging in physical altercations, harboring ill will, slandering each other, and fighting is highly inappropriate behavior. The concept of *ukhuwah* can only be achieved among those who share the same beliefs and cannot be established among individuals who hold opposing beliefs. According to Ash-Shabuni, this verse suggests that *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* has greater significance than family ties because individuals of different faiths cannot establish physical or spiritual relationships with brothers and sisters of the same faith (Ash-Shabuni, n.d.).

The content of Surah Ali’ Imran Verse 103 is related to the importance of maintaining *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* among Muslims, namely:

وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ
فُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ
آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

“And hold on to the ropes of Allah, and do not be divided, and remember Allah’s favor to you when you were enemies, and Allah unites your hearts, and by Allah’s favor you become brothers, and you are on the edge of the abyss, and Allah saves you from it. Thus Allah explains His Scriptures to you so that you may be guided.”

Mushtafa Al-Maraghi explains that, in this verse, Allah commands the believers to adhere to the principles of the Qur’an, as they will lead to the unity and coherence of Muslims after all believers have obeyed it. The Qur’an contains verses that command all its followers to adhere to the teachings and instructions of Allah and the Prophet Muhammad, which are found both in the Qur’an and the Sunnah. This teaching also includes ways to strengthen relationships within the Ukhuwah Islamiyah community (Mushtafa Al-Maraghi, 1974).

One of the words in has a very close content, namely in Surah Al-Imran verse 103 “*Wa’tashimuw bihablillaahi jamii’aa wa laa tafarraquw....*” with the content of Surah Al-Hujurat verse 10: “*Innamaa al-Mukminuun ikhwatun fa ashlihuw baina akhawaikum.....*” The correlation between the above verses can be explained as follows: Obeying Allah’s instruction to hold on to His rope, namely the Qur’an, will constrain the minds and hearts of its adherents by the principles and doctrines that govern Allah, thus fostering a sense of brotherhood among them. Everyone believes. In the event of a dispute between two factions within the Muslim community, the appointed leader is obligated to intervene and facilitate a fair reconciliation between the parties involved. The essence of Ukhuwah Islamiyah will lose its meaning if there is no harmony among Muslims, both within different groups and organizations, and between individuals who follow different schools of thought. The actual value and excellence of Ukhuwah Islamiyah lie in its ability to bring together Muslims who disagree on the principles of unifying religion, faith, and empathy (Mushtafa Al-Maraghi, 1974).

The Source of the Ukhuwah Islamiyah Split According to the Qur’an

According to the Qur’an, several factors can cause the disintegration of the order and friendship of Ukhuwah Islamiyah, leading to its destruction. The primary issue arises from a limited understanding of Islamic religious doctrine among its followers, leading them to a narrow, fragmented view of Islam. (Firdaus & Firmansyah, 2025) Verse 14 in Surah Al-Maidah provides an understanding of the reason behind such an incident, which reads:

وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصْرِي أَأَخَذْنَا مِيثَقَهُمْ فَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَأَغْرَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ
وَالْبَغْضَاءَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَسَوْفَ يُنَبِّئُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ

“Verily, we are Christians”, some of whom we have taken their covenant, but they (deliberately) forget some of what they have been warned about; so we caused enmity and hatred among them until the Day of Judgment. Moreover, Allah will tell them what they have done.”

Forgetting certain religious principles ultimately results in division and hostility among Muslims, which has occurred so far. Suppose there are groups of Muslims who ignore one aspect of the primary source and reason behind the teachings of Islam, and other groups ignore other aspects, and further groups underestimate or forget diverse perspectives (Abdillah, 2024). In that case, it will

inevitably lead to religious divisions among Muslims. Due to their lack of attention to certain aspects of the text's arguments, they are unaware of and ignore the content. It is widely believed that Muslim communities can be divided because certain members only adhere to certain aspects of Islam. Some groups focus solely on traditional rituals, ignoring social aspects, while others prioritize superficial ceremonies and overlook core values (Salsabila, 2019). In addition, some groups idolize the mystical aspects of Islam, such as tarekat activists, and those who are more concerned with esoteric elements than substantive and ideological teachings, such as activists/jama'ah dhikr councils.

Second; The Evil Factor. It is contained in the words of Allah in Surah Ash-Shura [42] verse 14:

وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعِيًّا بَيْنَهُمْ

“... and they are not divided except after knowledge has come to them because of enmity between them....”

Hasad, characterized by displeasure at the benefits enjoyed by a person or group, is a form of behavior. When an individual or group achieves something noteworthy, it is expected to inspire others to follow suit (Muslimat et al., 2025). However, when a particular entity persecutes them, it is common for other groups to unite to take revenge, even to the point of supporting that entity. Who caused him to be hurt or mistreated? Jealousy for jealousy can often arise in individuals, groups, religious institutions, and adherents of different faiths, leading to the division of Muslims and the breakdown of brotherhood (Fauziah, 2020).

Third, many people still prioritize emotions over common sense. In accordance with the content of Allah's words in Surah Al-Hashr [59] verse 14:

.... بِأَسْهُمٍ بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيدًا تَحْسَبُهُمْ جَمِيعًا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ شَتَّىٰ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

“.... The enmity between them was great. You think they are united while their hearts are divided. This is because they are indeed a people who do not use their senses.”

Reason has such an important meaning in Islam, to the point that individuals who are considered mentally unstable are not obliged to obey religious mandates. Despite the sincere need to address religious and social issues, it is all too common to discard logical thoughts and strong emotions in favor of taking precedence. It is very irrational for a group of Muslims to reject and intimidate other groups who have different views on the issue of circumcision, which is generally classified as a contentious issue in the Muslim community. The founders of various schools of thought acknowledged areas of disagreement, recognizing the authority of individual reasoning and the power of opposing arguments. As a result, they accept that unity among their opinions may not be possible (Sufyan & Hartono, 2023).

The Impact of Hoaxes on *Ukhuwah Islamiyah*

Hoaxes or fake news have a profound impact on *ukhuwah islamiyah*, namely, brotherhood and harmonious relations between Muslims. Here are some of the impacts that can occur due to *hoax news*:

1. Divisions in the Muslim Community: *Hoaxes* have the potential to trigger divisions in the Muslim community. When fake news related to religion or beliefs appears, differences of opinion and conflicts can arise among Muslims. This can damage the *Islamic ukhuwah* that should unite Muslims.
2. Spreading Fear and Suspicion: Hoax news is often designed to stoke fear and suspicion among Muslims. *Hoaxes* related to terrorism or threats to religion can create an atmosphere of fear and

mutual suspicion within the Muslim community. This can destroy trust and harmony between fellow Muslims.

3. Doubt and Loss of Trust: When *hoaxes* circulate and are accepted as facts, it can lead to doubt and loss of trust between fellow Muslims. If people cannot distinguish between hoax news and trustworthy news, their trust in information and others can be eroded. This can damage the relationship and *the Islamic ukhuwah*.
4. Distract from issues that matter: *Hoaxes* can be a distraction from issues that are important and need attention in Muslim society. When energy and attention are diverted to responding to and discussing *hoaxes*, more pressing issues, such as poverty, education, or social justice, can be overlooked. This can hinder the development and progress of Muslims as a whole.
5. Losses in da'wah and the spread of religion: *Hoaxes* related to Islam can be detrimental to da'wah and the spread of religion. If fake news that denigrates Islam or spreads wrong views circulates, then this can create negative stereotypes against Muslims. As a result, da'wah efforts are hampered, and negative perceptions of religion are getting stronger (Azka & Sari, 2023)

Efforts to Establish *Islamic Ukhuwah* in Overcoming *Hoax News*

In overcoming the impact of news *Hoaxes* towards *Ukhuwah Islamiyah*, five ways can be implemented in daily life to maintain brotherhood and harmonious relations between Muslims. Here are the different ways it should be done: (Alifi et al., 2024)

1. Raising Awareness of *Hoaxes*

It is important to raise awareness about the dangers of *hoax* news among Muslims. Through counseling, seminars, and social campaigns, Muslims can be given a better understanding of how to recognize and respond to *hoax news*.

2. Improving Digital and Critical Literacy

Muslims need to be empowered with digital and critical literacy skills to be able to sort out valid information from *hoax news*. Training and education on information verification, reliable sources, and accurate information tracing techniques should be provided to Muslims. By the words of Allah SWT, Q.S. Al-Isra verse 36:

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

“And do not follow what you do not know about. Indeed, hearing, sight, and heart, all of these will be held accountable.”

In the Tafsir of Quraish Shihab, it is stated that O people, if there is something that you do not understand, do not hesitate to speak. Please refrain from saying “I have heard” (because this obviously did not happen) or “I already knew” (because this did not happen). As expected, on the wedding day, the favors made of hearing, sight, and heart will be presented as evidence of the owner’s lack of remorse for whatever they produce. Therefore, this verse reminds Muslims not to follow or spread information that is not known to be true. Digital and critical literacy are essential for acquiring the correct knowledge and behaving responsibly towards the information received or disseminated (Shihab, 2005).

3. Building a Constructive Dialogue

It is essential to foster constructive, respectful dialogue to combat misinformation and hoaxes. Muslims need to be invited to discuss, exchange information, and assist one another in identifying and disseminating accurate information.

4. Supporting the Anti-Hoax Movement

Muslims can join the anti-hoaxes in the community. This movement may involve the formation of special teams or groups tasked with verifying the truth of information before disseminating it and raising awareness of the dangers of news *Hoaxes*. Ways to support the anti-hoaxes include actively checking and verifying information. Before spreading news, ensure you verify it. Check the source of information, verify the news using reliable sources, and avoid spreading unverified information (Ardi et al., 2023):

5. Forming a Trust Network

It is important to establish a network of trust between Muslims. Through intense and supportive relationships, Muslims can provide one another with accurate information and build trust when responding to news *Hoaxes*. One way to build a trust network is to foster open, honest communication, join belief groups, and support trusted leaders. Additionally, adhering to Islamic teachings in interactions is crucial (Elsanita et al., 2024):

Table 2: Analysis of successful hoax mitigation strategies practiced by informants revealed concrete approaches rooted in Islamic ethics.

Islamic Principle	Quranic Foundation	Practical Implementation	Challenges Faced	Effectiveness Rating (1-5)	Informant Adoption Rate
<i>Tabayyun</i> (Verification)	Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 6	Cross-checking with official Islamic institutions (MUI, NU, Muhammadiyah) before sharing	Time-consuming; lack of accessible verification channels	4.5	60%
<i>Husn al-Dhann</i> (Good Assumption)	Multiple hadith	Refusing to believe harmful content about fellow Muslims immediately	Emotional reactions override rational thinking	3.8	45%
<i>Amr Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar</i> (Enjoining Good)	Q.S. Ali' Imran: 104	Politely correcting false information with verified sources	Fear of social conflict; perceived as judgmental	4.2	52%
<i>Silaturahmi</i> (Maintaining Bonds)	Multiple hadith	Direct communication with affected parties before sharing controversial content	Requires more effort than instant sharing	4.7	38%
<i>Ta'awun</i> (Mutual Assistance)	Q.S. Al-Ma'idah: 2	Creating religious WhatsApp groups with fact-checking protocols	Inconsistent participation; group fatigue	4.0	33%

Table 2 presents a critical finding that moves beyond surface-level description: the most effective mitigation strategy — *silaturahmi* (maintaining relational bonds, effectiveness score 4.7) — paradoxically has the lowest adoption rate (38%) among NU informants. By contrast, *tabayyun* (verification, effectiveness score 4.5) enjoys the highest adoption rate (60%), suggesting that while knowledge-based strategies are more widely practiced, relational strategies — which require greater effort and social vulnerability — remain underutilized despite their higher impact. This inverse relationship between effectiveness and adoption constitutes what this study terms the “implementation gap” in Islamic counter-hoax practice within NU communities. The data is consistent with the broader “Emotional Bypass Phenomenon” identified in this research: NU members understand Islamic verification norms (87% awareness of *tabayyun*) but apply relational strategies inconsistently when confronted with emotionally charged content. An informant (Male, 47, pesantren educator) articulated this tension directly: “In theory, Islam teaches us to maintain *silaturahmi* before spreading any news. But when someone shares something that appears to insult an NU leader, people react instantly. The brotherhood becomes a secondary consideration.”

This testimony reinforces a structural insight: the effectiveness of Islamic ethical principles as counter-hoax tools is contingent not only on religious knowledge but on emotional regulation capacities that current Islamic education programs within NU do not consistently cultivate. Furthermore, the relatively low adoption of *ta'awun* (mutual assistance, 33%) and the high challenge of “group fatigue” in WhatsApp fact-checking groups point to a sustainability problem: community-based verification mechanisms are effective in the short term but vulnerable to attrition without institutional reinforcement. This finding directly supports the study’s recommendation for a “Digital Fiqh Council” embedded within NU’s existing organizational infrastructure — not as an additional voluntary body, but as a formalized institutional function capable of sustaining counter-hoax activity over the long term.

The Emotional Bypass Phenomenon and the Tabayyun Gap. A central analytical contribution of this study is the identification of a structural gap between Islamic knowledge and Islamic practice in the context of digital information. The data show that 87% of NU informants are familiar with the principle of *tabayyun* as mandated in Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 6, yet only 33% consistently apply it when encountering emotionally charged religious content. This is not merely a literacy problem — it is an affective override problem. Emotionally salient content triggers what this study terms the “Emotional Bypass Phenomenon,” wherein the cognitive process of verification is circumvented by an immediate emotional response, particularly when the content affirms or threatens group identity. An informant (Male, 31, NU youth activist) described this dynamic: “When I see a video that appears to insult NU or its leaders, my first instinct is to forward it immediately so others can respond. I know I should check first, but the feeling of urgency is stronger than the habit of verification.” This testimony points to a fundamental pedagogical gap in NU’s religious education: *Tabayyun* is taught as a doctrinal norm, but the emotional competencies required to enact it under conditions of social pressure are not systematically cultivated. Bridging this gap requires integrating psychological resilience training alongside Islamic ethics curricula — a recommendation that emerges directly from, and is grounded in, the interview data.

Community-Based Verification as a Structural Counter-Measure. Despite the challenges documented above, the data also reveal a resilient capacity for collective counter-hoax action within NU organizational structures. Mosque-based verification networks were reported by informants to reduce hoax circulation by up to 73% within participating communities, while digitally trained youth teams reduced hoax impact by 65%. These figures are analytically significant not only for their magnitude but for what they reveal about the conditions under which Islamic ethical principles translate into effective

community practice. Effectiveness appears to be highest when (a) verification is institutionalized rather than ad hoc, (b) trusted figures — such as mosque administrators or pesantren educators — anchor the network, and (c) young people are empowered as active agents rather than passive recipients of information. The following informant accounts illustrate these conditions in practice:

1. “Cek Dulu Sebelum Share” (Check Before Sharing) Campaign: A mosque in Semarang implemented a 24-hour verification rule where any religious content must be confirmed by designated fact-checkers (trained volunteers) before distribution through official channels. This reduced hoax circulation by 78% over six months.
2. Interfaith Verification Networks: Muslim communities in Yogyakarta collaborated with Catholic and Protestant fact-checking groups to cross-verify content related to interfaith issues, preventing 15 potentially inflammatory incidents in 2024.
3. Youth Digital Da’wah Teams: Islamic youth organizations trained members in digital forensics and religious literacy, creating rapid-response teams that could address viral hoaxes within hours through Instagram stories and TikTok videos using popular culture references to reach younger audiences.

CONCLUSION

Amidst the proliferation of hoaxes in Indonesia, preserving ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood) no longer depends solely on traditional social relationships. However, it must also include information literacy, media ethics, and strengthening the values of the Qur’an in responding to news. Effective resistance to hoaxes requires a synthesis of the epistemological heritage of Islam and digital citizenship to create a community that is spiritually resilient, digitally savvy, and socially cohesive. Some key points from the conclusions of this study include: **The Importance of Ukhuwah Networks:** Communities with strong ukhuwah networks show 78% greater resilience to disinformation than weak communities. **The Phenomenon of Emotional Bypass:** The study revealed a critical gap where 87% of Muslims are aware of the Islamic principle of verification (tabayyun), but only 33% actually apply it to emotionally charged content. This indicates that religious education should be complemented by psychological resilience training. **Effectiveness of Community-Based Verification:** Mosque-based verification networks have been proven to reduce the circulation of hoaxes by 73%. In addition, digital da’wah teams led by young people have reduced the impact of hoaxes by 65%. **Theoretical and Practical Innovations:** This study introduces the “Digital Tabayyun Framework” (operationalizing Q.S. (Al-Hujurat: 6) and the “Neo-Isnad Methodology,” which adapts hadith authentication for digital content analysis. In practice, it is recommended to establish a “Digital Fiqh Council” to provide a rapid assessment of viral content and empower youth as “ambassadors of cyber ukhuwah.” **The Negative Impact of Hoaxes:** Without mitigation measures, hoaxes can cause division among the ummah, spread fear and suspicion, and erode trust among fellow Muslims, ultimately damaging the pillars of ukhuwah.

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