FORMULATION OF ACCEPTABILITY INDEX OF YOUTUBE VIDEOS ON ISLAM: INDICATORS FROM THE SCIENCE OF HADITH CLASSIFICATIONS

[1]SUHAIMI SALLE, [2]NORAINI ABDULLAH

[1]Communication Program, Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Heritage
[2]Mathematics with Economics Program, Faculty of Science and Natural Resources
University Malaysia Sabah
E-mail: [1]ssuhaimi@ums.edu.my, [2]noraini@ums.edu.my

Abstract - This paper is an exploration into the possibility of outlining a verification procedure and construction of an Index of Acceptability of Islamic contents made available via the Internet especially YouTube videos. Inference are made from guidelines on source reliability presented by university libraries and the Islamic traditional science of classification of the Prophetic sayings and traditions (Hadith). A rudimentary formula ($I_A = Q_{IS} + Q_{IR} + Q_{NR} + Q_{IT}$) is proposed to start this exploration. It is projected that robust and usable material acceptability indexing procedure can be evolved through time. Given the overwhelming quantity of materials easily downloadable from the Internet, the question of quality must also be addressed. The perceived possibility of negatively interpreted religious sources towards inciting conflict must be mitigated by efficient methods of sorting and gatekeeping inflamatory materials. Of all the variables for inclusion into the indexing formula, the source's authority must top the list.

Index Terms - reliability index, source credibility, verification

I. INTRODUCTION

Brahm (2005)[1] writing about religion and conflict said: "Although not necessarily so, there are some aspects of religion that make it susceptible to being a latent source of conflict. All religions have their accepted dogma, or articles of belief, that followers must accept without question. This can lead to inflexibility and intolerance in the face of other beliefs. After all, if it is the word of God, how can one compromise it? At the same time, scripture and dogma are often vague and open to interpretation. Therefore, conflict can arise over whose interpretation is the correct one, a conflict that ultimately cannot be solved because there is no arbiter. The winner generally is the interpretation that attracts the most followers. However, those followers must also be motivated to action. Although, almost invariably, the majority of any faith hold moderate views, they are often more complacent, whereas extremists are motivated to bring their interpretation of God's will to fruition." The above quote sets the direction of this paper in so far it ponders about how "conflict can arise over whose interpretation is the correct one, a conflict that ultimately cannot be solved because there is no arbiter". This becomes the rationale for the efforts towards implementing content verification procedure for Islamic materials readily distributable especially in the light of unfortunate events which escalated Islamophobia. Related to the importance of the reliability of sources and commenting on the verification of dessiminated information, Mohamad Razif Mohamad Fuad (2015) [2] wrote that while acknowledging the potential positive or negative impacts of easy availability of materials published online, quoted the Office of the Mufti of the Kuala Lumpur Federal Territory which emphasised the importance of verification or tabayyun as described in Surah al Hujurat:

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَـا ٱلَّـذِينَ ءَامَنُـوٓاْ إِن جَـآءَكُمۡ فَاسِـقُۢ بِنَبَـإٖ فَتَبَيَّنُـوٓاْ أَن تُصِيبُـواْ
قَوۡمَۢا بِجَهَـٰلَـةٖ فَتُصۡبِحُـواْ عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلۡتُمۡ نَـٰدِمِينَ ٦

O ye who believe! If an evil liver bring you tidings, verify it, lest ye smite some folks in ignorance and afterward repent of what ye did. (Verse 6) It apparently is essential that all information to be spread must have their authenticity and interpretation be verified before hand.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Referring to Mai (2013)[3], Colepicolo (2015)[4] said "the quality of information is coupled to its contextual meaning, with the establishment of a dialogue between the sender and the seeker. The evaluation of information must include a consideration of the intent and knowledge of the subject, contextual factors and seeker activities and interests. Thus, in every new search, the following attributes must be established to guarantee quality information: accuracy, authenticity, authority, balance, completeness, credibility, actuality, neutrality, relevance, reliability, objectivity, safeness, utility, usability and validity, among others (Hilligoss and Rieh, 2008; Mai, 2013)".[5] In their paper about how the study of information credibility has evolved over the years, Lai Che Ching et al. (2017)[6], they described how the study of information credibility in general can be divided into three main strands. There are studies conducted by communication scholars, business

scholars and the information and communication technology scholars (ICT scholars). Each of these strands offer different focus on what it takes as credible information. Studies on information credibility by the communication scholars are tightly related to the field of persuasion. Researchers have sought to identify how sources, messages, recipients, channels and contextual factors affect a person's susceptibility to persuasion or in other words how the person perceived the information as credible. Communication researchers have studied 'source credibility' but have primarily used it as an independent variable predicting persuasion and conducted a survey to find out whether politically-interested web users online view web publications as credible as their traditional versions. Apart from studying the source of messages, communication researchers have been conducting studies on the various elements of messages such as language intensity style, attractiveness and quality that could affect message perceptions. Studies on the individual extrinsic information or using outside information to evaluate mediated messages have also been explored by to understand how people perceived credible information. In their article on media and the formation of identity amongst youths in a rural location in Sabah, (Suhaimi & Noraini, 2017)[7] concluded that the current availability of new media technology in the form of the internet has led to the flood of information, disinformation and cyber thrash. Media in its old and new forms continue to create new attitudes, reinforce imbibed ones or lead to a confused state. They further stated that in line with the attractive promotions and establishment of broadband Internet access by the Malaysian Government, the youths perceive the Internet as the most influential media compared to television, radio and newspapers. In its page about Checklist for Evaluating Web Resources[8], the libraries of the University of Southern Maine suggested possible verification procedures which take into consideration, among other variables,the sources' authority and scope. It details them out as follows:

Authority:
1. Is the information reliable?
2. Check the author's credentials and affiliation. Is the author an expert in the field?
3. Does the resource have a reputable organization or expert behind it?
4. Are the sources of information stated? Can you verify the information?
5. Can the author be contacted for clarification?
6. Check for organizational or author biases.

Scope:
1. Is the material at this site useful, unique, accurate or is it derivative, repetitious, or doubtful?
2. Is the information available in other formats?
3. Is the purpose of the resource clearly stated? Does it fulfill its purpose?
4. What items are included in the resource? What subject area, time period, formats or types of material are covered?
5. Is the information factual or opinion?
6. Does the site contain original information or simply links?
7. How frequently is the resource updated?
8. Does the site have clear and obvious pointers to new content?

The libraries of the University of Georgia had these, among others, as a guide on the reliability of sources [9]:

1. A reliable source is one that provides a thorough, well-reasoned theory, argument, discussion, etc. based on strong evidence.
2. Scholarly, peer-reviewed articles or books -written by researchers for students and researchers. Original research, extensive bibliography.

Using the above as initial guide for conceptualizing verification procedure, these are the plausible variables for consideration about the source of the materials:

1. Authority of the writer/speaker
2. Reliability i.e. the material is thorough, well-reasoned, with strong evidence
3. Scholars/peer reviews

Within the Islamic tradition itself, the concept and operationalization of verification is termed tabayyun. Tabayyun implies that audiences must be meticulous and cautious in making conclusions when confronted with information or news. These information and news may spark dissensions or contraversies although they may be true. Dissension which was spread due vague information and news received may lead the whole community to adopt suspicious stance towards others. These detriments are much more hurtful if they impinge upon close relatives and friends. This potential bala (trials) must be taken into account and dealth with with resoluteness in our quests to convey information and news truthfully and accurately. Further, two established sciences related to the concept and practice of verification in the Islamic tradition are procedures for the Classification of Hadith (Mustalah al-Hadith) and the study of the reporters of Hadith (Rijal al-Hadith). [10]. A Hadith is comprised of the chain of reporters, text and the taraf. The following Figure 1 summarise how it is classified,

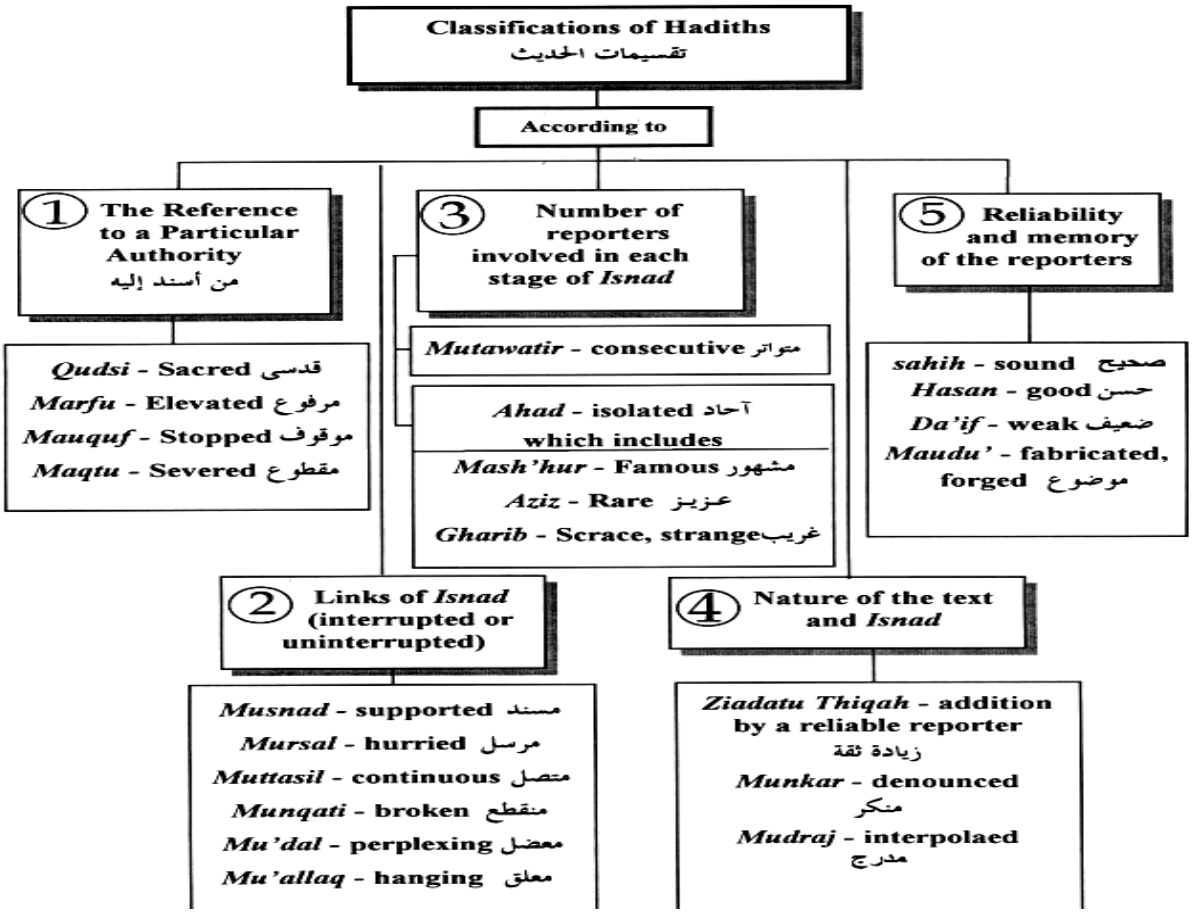

Figure 1. Procedures of Hadith Classification[11]

III. METHODOLOGY

Based on materials mentioned in the Literature Review section, and the classification of Hadith by [11] above, the following modellingprocedures on Acceptability Index are proposed as indicated in the flowchart given by Figure 2.

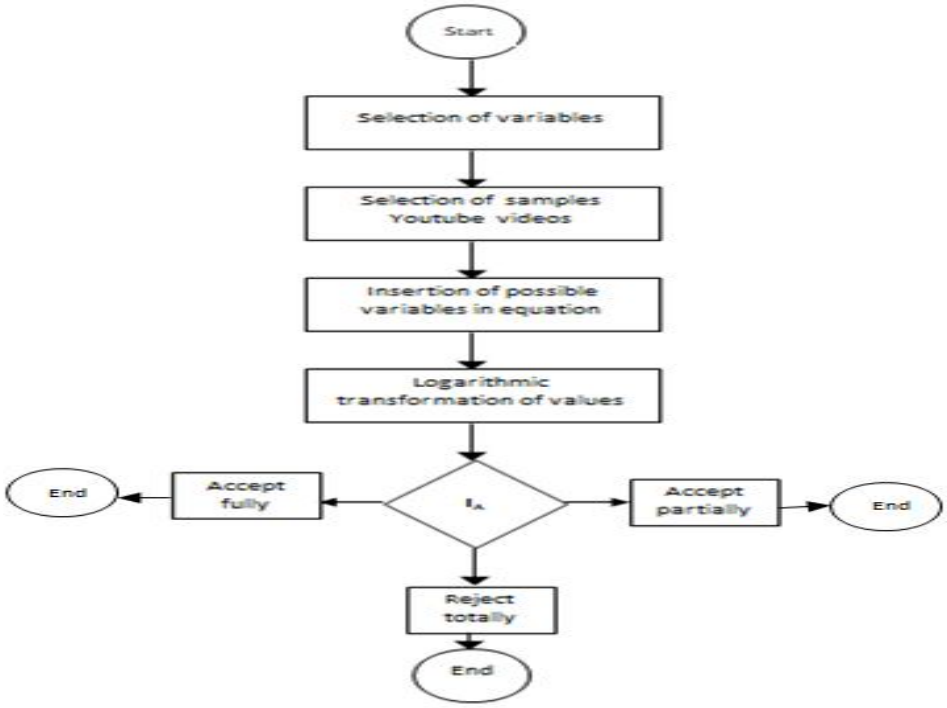

Figure 2. Suhaimi-Noraini Modelling Procedures of Acceptability Index on Islamic Contents

The Suhaimi-Noraini (S-N) modelling procedures can be briefly described as follows:-

Step 1: Selection of variables for inclusion in the formula for the Index of Acceptability (I_A)

Referring to Figure 1, it can be seen that Hadith Reliability can be formulated using points 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively. This is given by Equation (1) below.

Hadith Reliability = Authority + Quality of Isnad* + Number of Isnad + Nature of Text

……(1)

*Isnad = chain of transmission

Analogous to the above, definitions are thus given to each variables in the equation

Hadith Reliability	= Index of Acceptability	= I_A
Authority of source	= Quality of Source	= Q_{IS}
Quality of chain of reporters	= Quality of Reporters	= Q_{IR}
Number of chains of reporters	= Quantity of Reporters	= Q_{NR}
Nature of Text	= Quality of Text	= Q_{IT}

Hence, based on the section above, the authors thus propose the following Equation (2), as the initial formula for the construction of the Index of Acceptability:

$I_A = Q_{IS} + Q_{IR} + Q_{NR} + Q_{IT}$……...(2)

Step 2: Selection of samples of YouTube videos representing the following criteria:-

i. Highlyauthoritativesources,and
ii. Problematic sources

These criteria form the priority importance of the acceptability index with the higher level of importance for the highly authoritative sources, as compared to the problematic sources.

Step 3: Insertion of possible values of variables inEquation (2)identifiable from the sampled videos.

This step demands the insertion of values in Step 2, after data are collected through the internet. Five likert scale of values ranging from 0 to 4 are given to each possible variables in Equation (2) above.

Step 4: LogarithmicTransformation of Inserted Values

This step demands the transformation of Equation (2), after the insertion of values of Step 3. Logarithmic transformation of the natural log of the inserted values are executed, such that, criteria of the acceptability index should be given by:-

$I_A = 1$ if the videos are fully acceptable,
$I_A < 1$ for partially acceptable and,
$I_A = 0$ for full rejection.

Modelling procedures from Step 1 to Step 4 form the subsequent steps carried out in obtaining the index of acceptability of the Islamic contents in this study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Initial samples of YouTube videos sources are identified and possible values are inserted in Equation 2, identifiable from the sampled videos. The values are then transformed using ln and log functions as depicted in the Table 2 below. Videos from two sources on YouTube namelyPROmediaTAJDID and Sufilive are viewed where the identities of the presenters are examined. On the surface, PROmediaTAJDID represents mainstream scholars while Sufilive is a proponent of the sufistic tradition. Mainstream scholars are said to be more legalistic and popular in approach while sufis are into the esoteric aspects of Islam. Incidently, the selected figures by video uploader PROmediaTAJDID are members of Perlis Fatwa Council.

Table2.Sources,ValuesandTransformation

Variable	Highly Authoritative Source **PROmediaTAJDID** https://www.youtube.com/user/promediatajdid1/about	Problematic Source **Sufilive** https://www.youtube.com/user/sufilive/about
Examples of presenters:	1. Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin 2. Kamilin Jamilin 3. Salman Ali	1. Muhammad Nazim Al Haqqani 2. Muhammad Hisham Kabbani 3. Habib Ali Al Jifri
Quality of Source Q_{IS}	0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 **4**	0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 **2**
Quality of Reporters Q_{IR}	0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 **4**	0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 **2**
Quantity of Reporters Q_{NR}	0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 **2**	0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 **2**
Quality of Text Q_{IT}	0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 **4**	0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 **2**
Index of Acceptability I_A	=log(ln(4)+ ln(4)+ ln(2)+ ln(4)) = **0.74**	=log(ln(2)+ ln(2)+ ln(2)+ ln(2)) = **0.44**

On examination of the sources (the publisher/uploader and presenters/content provider, a score of 0 to 4 was given to the selected variables as shown in Table 2. To achieve a simplified index, log and ln (natural log) functions are used to transform scores. Acceptability index of as near to 1.0 is considered as near perfect. From Table 2, it can be deduced that highly authoritative sources scored higher with I_A=0.74, compared to problematic sources which scored I_A=0.44.

Hence, an updated formula for the Index of Acceptability is given by Equation (3),

$$I_A = \log (\ln Q_{IS} + \ln Q_{IR} + \ln Q_{NR} + \ln Q_{IT}) \ldots..(3)$$

For this exercise, PROmediaTAJDID which represents the mainstream scholarsgets I_A = 0.74, which is higher than Sufilive with I_A = 0.44, as expected.

For the purpose of future identification, Equation (3) will be subsequently known as the Suhaimi-Noraini Index of Content Acceptability.

CONCLUSIONS

It is apparent that this attempt at indexing contents hinges on the quality and quantity of the sources of identified variables. Within the Islamic traditions, the science of verification had assisted the Muslim communities to detect problematic and potentially disruptive interpretations of Islam. Based on reported sayings of Prophet Muhammad, Yahya Ibrahim (2015) [12] extracted these eight characteristics of Muslim extermists:

1. They will be young in age
2. Angry and foolish
3. Arrogant and boastful
4. Abundant in worship
5. Misinterpretation of the quran
6. Eloquent in speech
7. Passing out fatawas of disbelief against muslims and considering their blood as lawful
8. Slandering the scholars

These indicate the possibilities that some Muslim believers may adopt certain thinking and action which goes against the actual intends of religion. Either their sources of such stances were blinds adherence or cultish obedience to a favourite personality, incompetent scholars, lack of knowledge, hasty interpretations or mere submission to whims and personal inclinations. Sad to say eloquence in speech and abundant ritualistic practice are not adequate indicators of high acceptabilty. The current trend to understand the Islamic texts, concepts and rituals according to the rejuvenated science of Maqāsid of Shariah (Objectives of the Shariah) is a welcomed development and way forward to foster a modern insights of Islam and empasize a harmonious bridge-building inter-ethnic relations. The why's of Islam and the Shariah must show the overwhelming mercy of God rather than the emotional and harsh judgement of man. According to Jasser Auda (2008)[13], maqāsid al-shariah is the branch of Islamic knowledge that answers allquestions of 'why' on various levels. Purposes or maqāsid of the Islamic law themselves are classified in various ways,according to a number of dimensions. The following are some of these dimensions:

1. Levels of necessity, which is the traditional classification
2. Scope of the rulings aiming to achieve purposes
3. Scope of people included in purposes
4. Level of universality of the purposes

Brahm (2005) was of the opinion that "in part, the solution is to promote a heightened awareness of the positive peace building and reconciliatory role religion has played in many conflict situations. More generally, fighting ignorance can go a long way". Although time has proven that the virulent perception and interpretation of religious speeches and texts had incited some members of the Muslim community, their proportionately small number belied the benevolent demeanor of the vast majority of this community plagued by Islamophobia. By calculating the priorities, a management approach can be developed and ultimately, the construction of a set of appropriate strategy alternatives for organizations such as Malaysian Commission on Multimedia and Communication (MCMC) to effectively exercise its policies. The need to popularise and adopt user-friendly procedure of contents verification of religious speeches and texts via internet-based broadcast materials has made this an urgent undertaking. Assessment and mitgation against conflictual contents must be implemented. Only authoritative sources can be allowed to pass through The Gate.

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