

SOCIAL MEDIA MISINFORMATION AMONG RELIGIOUS ADHERENTS IN LAGOS STATE: ISLAMIC RECIPE

KOLAWOLE, Hakeem Adeyinka & HASHIM Olanrewaju Shuarau
Department of Islamic Studies,
Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education,
Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos
+2348052410698
Abuatiyah1430@gmail.com

Abstract

Traditional society was a world of unity among different folds including religious adherents. Every tempting issue during this period was easily resolved since face to face motion and counter-motion were carried out among concern members. So, peace reigned and tension averted with ease. However, with the emergence of technological era that turns the world to global village, the peace of traditional society was truncated and tension sprung especially among religious adherents. To this end, restoring peace becomes necessary if cordial relationship that exist during the olden days where individuals are brethren keeper must be brought back. This paper therefore, methodologically uses textual analysis contained in the Glorious Qur'an 49:6-9 among others and historical survey of religious tension to advocate means through which social media information can be scrutinized. The result shows that both formidable religions in Nigeria (Christianity and Islam) preach peace but hearsay among some elements open wall for the penetration of lizard among them. It then recommends that verification of all social media information be carried out with absolute objectivity before any action can be taken.

Keywords: Islam, Nigeria, Peace, Social Media

Introduction

Nigeria is a state with formidable two religions (Christianity and Islam) institutions. These religious institutions lived harmoniously with each other during traditional society where social, political and economical activities were carried out collectively with utmost trust and sincerity. Nobody can differentiate between children of Muslims and Christians. Even festivals are celebrated visiting one another, rendering family eulogy, singing and dancing. Animals for Christians festivals are slaughtered by Muslims to make consumption lawful for everybody. It was a time when Muslims and Christians slept in one another houses with the two eyes closed. Here come 20th and 21st centuries with lots of innovations and technologies that have exerted numerous influences on all facets of Nigeria lives. Some of these changes are benevolent to individual as well collective. The merit of some of these innovations and technologies are boundless and countless. The potential at which things are done with ease and fast opened door for more easiest ways of getting them done at fastest and easiest way for human comfortability are also innumerable.

However, the fact that, there is no positivity without its negativity came to play with arrival of technological devices. Because, despite the fact that, these devices are full of purposes, assets and comforts for mankind, some of the shortfalls are disastrous and endangered peace and harmony established among individuals and groups to whom the devises are meant. Among the

group to which the technology has distorted their peace is religious community. In other to fine-tune the havoc of technology especially social media on religious setting, hence this study.

Concept of Islam

Islam which has been literally translated to mean peace is a religion of principle, law and instruction laid by Allah to guide affairs of creatures towards fulfilment of purpose to which they are created. Everything pertaining to Islam has been perfected and institutionalised for almost two millenniums now and in affirmation of its comprehensiveness, it states that ‘nothing is omitted in the book’.

The word Islam has been defined variously by eminent scholars and often used as Islamic education because Islam and Islamic Education are two inseparable entities according to the stand of Fafunwa, 1977. Islam or Islamic education was defined at the first conference of Islamic education in 1977 in Saudi Arabia as education that aims at “the balanced growth of man through the training of man’s spirit and intellect, the rational self, feelings and bodily sense”. Bidmos, 2008 quoted Sarwa to have expounded the submission of 1977 conference thus:

Islamic education is a system which transmits the revealed and acquired knowledge to the younger generation of Muslims in order to prepare them for life and enables them to discharge their duties as vicegerents of Allah on earth with the sole aim of achieving success here and Hereafter.

Islamic education is a balanced system of education because it combines the mundane and the revealed knowledge. It reconciles between the spiritual and the material need of man. It is a form of education that emphasizes in strong terms **moral judgment**. Those who engage in child abuse should be taught that there is judgment for their actions both in the grave and the hereafter. Islamic education will instill this fear in them. It will greatly enhance the understanding of dealing with children. In Islam, children are seen as precious sprouts which need tender care until adulthood. Child abuse thus does not have a place in the teachings of Islam. It should be noted that Muslims are enjoined to promote righteousness.

The Qur’an 3:104 states:

Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining righteousness and forbidding evils. And it is they who are the successful, 3:104

Concept of Social Media

The term social media is like other concepts that connotes different things to different people depending on the perspective to which the person is talking. But for clarity purpose, the two terms involved will be looked into differently before the two will be treated as a concept. To this, what is social and what is media?

Social according to the Advanced Learner Dictionary 8th edition, is defined as being “connected with activities in which people meet each other for pleasure”. The implication of this definition is that, the concept is concerned with leisure rather than any other activities be it business, education, networking or otherwise.

Media according to Elizabeth (2008) refers to communication channel through which news, entertainment, education, data, promotional messages are disseminated. Media by this definition includes every broadcasting and casting narrow, casting medium such as newspaper, magazines, television, radio, direct mail, telephone, fax and internet.

Putting two words together, Social Media is defined according to Balogun, Kolawole & Oseni (2019) as platform used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among individuals, organizations and communities at large. It should be noted that one of the fastest growing technological invention of 21st century among professionals across the fields of learning is Information and Communication Technology. The fact that social media has been game changing phenomenon in the 21st century remain unarguable within the purview of information and communication.

Again, social media can be said to be social interaction among people in which they create and share information and idea in virtual communities and network, Luno (2017). It can be deduced from the definitions above therefore, that social media is technological base system through which wide spread of human communications are enabled. By implication, social media is a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities. By design, social media is internet-based and give users quick electronic communication of content.

Qur'an 49: 6-9

The holy Qur'an chapter 49 verses 6 to 9 read thus:

O you who believed, if there comes to you disobedient one with information, **investigate**, lest you harm a people out ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful. And you know is the messenger of Allah. If he was to obey you in much of the matter, you would be in difficulty, but Allah has endeared to you the faith and has made it pleasing in your hearts and has made hateful to you, disbelief, defiance and disobedience. Those are (rightly) guided. (It is) as bounty from Allah and favour. And Allah is knowing and wise. And if two factions among the believers should fight, then make settlement between the two. But if one of them oppresses the other, then fight against the one that oppresses until it returns to the ordinance of Allah. And if it returns, then make settlement between them in justice and act justly. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.

Causes of Propaganda on Social Media among Religious

The society of ours is a society that religion has a great role to play if the speedy development will be achieved. On the other way round, there are evil minded individuals that are working assiduously not to have such development achieved. They therefore turn any opportunity that comes their way into advantage knowing fully that some individual among citizens and residents that are careless, enemy or ignorant but want to be relevant. So, the masterminds just need to come up with a propaganda and send online, within a twinkle of an eye, the careless, enemy and ignorant without mindfulness spread such without limitation.

Therefore, among several variables that are responsible for the spread of untrue information among religious setting include but not limited to the following:

- i. **Ignorance:** Ignorance is said to be a disease among visionary individuals. So, lack of knowledge of likely implication or end result make people most of the time to engage in what is not and probably cause tense in the society. This is the main reason it is tagged as the root of all diseases. The adverse of ignorance in any society cannot be quantified because of negative effect on that society. So, because of adverse effect of ignorance, the holy Qur'an has made it a concept to be seeking refuge of Allah from as prophet Musa, Yusuf among others sought refuge of Allah from ignorance.
- ii. **Image Making:** some individuals at times engage in spreading untrue information to make name or to attain a pedigree beyond their status. It should be noted that, while doing this, a reckoned personality or influential is blasphemed. Some individual involving in this

attitude are carefree of whether it affects others or not but their primary objectives is to make name and diminish any other person that comes their way.

- iii. **Idleness:** Idleness has been referred to as the workshop of devil because, several negative things or evil thinking comes as result of doing nothing. Among things that could come as a result of idleness is framing something that does not exist. Any individuals that get carried away as a result of idleness can do and undo because such person lacks control over him/herself until the situation has him/her regret.
- iv. **Character Assassination:** In most cases, information is carried carelessly to destroy the image of another person as a result of what was done unknowingly or what was done regrettably. The image destroyer will then device all means to ensure image of the person are tarnished in the name of something insignificant.
- v. **Monetary/ Material Gain:** propaganda at times are done for monetary gain. There exist some individuals that their major occupation is to make livelihood from falsehood. These categories of people are careless of what befall anybody provided they are able to reap from their falsehood. In most cases, these set of people are enemy within and information are lopsided combining positivity and negativity together all because of their monetary or material gain.
- vi. **Wrong Thinking:** it is of importance to know that, some element in this life have surrounded with negative thinking. The purpose of doing this might not be for commercialization or image assassination but the fact that they lack wisdom of positive reflection or that their brains are working anticlockwise. These people see nothing good in what others are praising to be worthy because of their lack of judgemental will.

Problems of Religious Propaganda on Social Media

There are several problems emanated from untrue information circulate on social media among the religious adherents. Some of these problems are:

- i. **Grudge:** some religious or denominations develop hatred for others because of information painted and leveled against the others. This adversely contribute to the degeneration of enmity among such religious or denomination members.
- ii. **Revenge:** a mean of retaliation at times device to revenge what someone thought another person did wrongly. Meanwhile, in a real sense, something of such might not see the light of the day but it was cooked to cause separation among religious or denomination folds.
- iii. **Breaking Tie:** Nigerian is a society with the two formidable religions within a family especially among the south-west Nigerians. The case of malicious information therefore has broken the tie of many families that reconciliation would be hard. Even some have embarked on lifetime enmity.
- iv. **Criticizing:** some set of individuals are not ready to see something good in what other people are doing. So, where some are critiquing, they begin spread of malicious information and fault finding in everything that worth commendation.
- v. **Physical /spiritual confrontation:** misinformation and malicious information has led some religious leaders to confront each other or one another either physically or spiritually. This, to some extent has caused death to some while some are on life support and others are yet to recover from the trauma. Today, Facebook has become a reference point in this regard especially a popular platform known as Truth Tv where malicious and physical attacks are carried out on personalities ignorantly.

Solutions to the Problems

It is reported in Arabic proverb that ‘human is an enemy of what he/she knows not’. Based on the above statement, insinuation mostly leads to propaganda or rumors that harm fellow being and assassinate their character. In other to avoid such, the holy Qur’an emphatically stressed thus:

O you who believed, avoid much (negative) assumption.
Indeed, some assumption is a sin. And do not spy or backbite
each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother
when dead? You will detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah
is Accepting of Repentance and Merciful. Qur’an 49:12

So, in other to maintain the standard and ethnic of Islam doctrine, the following strategies should be adopted as solutions to misleading information among religious adherents.

i. **Scrutiny:** with this, the viability or otherwise of the information is cross-examined using the power of reasoning that individuals are endowed with. This actually account for why some scholars are of the opinion that the gate of Ijtihad (striveness) is opened. So, to value the sincerity of scrutinization of information, Allah says thus: And do they not reflect upon the Qur’an? If it had been from (any) other than Allah, they would have found within thee contradictions. Qur’an 4:82

ii. **Seeking knowledge:** Knowledge is an important element with which information could be accepted or rejected. This is because, among the common sayings is that, rumors are carried by enemy, accepted by ignorant and spread by fools. So, in other to be exempted among the enemies, ignorant and fools, Qur’an 16:43 states thus: ‘..... so, ask the people of the message if you do not know’.

To crown the extent with which Allāh cherishes seeking of knowledge, Qur’an 39:9 states; ‘..... Say, “Are those who know equal to those who do not know?” Only they will reflect (who are) people of understanding’.

iii. **Seeking Information Source:** One of the paramount reliabilities of any information is source. Four elements have been identified to be source of information; these four things must be looked into before such information could be viable. The four elements are: (a) sender (the communicator whom the message emanated from). (b) Receiver (The person whose the message is communicated to). (c) Chain (The medium through which message is communicated. It could be written in form of letter or memo and it could be verbal or otherwise). (d) Message (this is message that needs to be authenticated). And because Islam is a religion that queries both means and ends of everything, Qur’an 17:36 warns that: and do no pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart about all those (one) will be questioned’.

iv. **Verification/investigation:** the best chain of authenticating information founded in holy Qur’an is to verify and investigate the information. The main reason for this is to disallow spreading of propaganda that will continue diminish the character of some individuals or groups against the other. It should be noted that, insinuation, propaganda and rumour are indices that tend to destroy the image of any peaceful society and destabilize their unequivocal entity by causing enmity among them.

It should be borne in mind that, as religious adherents, our responsibilities are not limited to gathering or collecting information alone but also to verify the authenticity of same. So, verification of truth and management of knowledge are essentials to religious ideology. It must be also emphasized here that, the companions of the prophet survived the divisions that tempted them because of the act of obedience to verification of information after the incident that tempted that later made *Aishah* the wife of the prophet to war against Ali in the battle of *siffin*. To

appreciate the significance of verification of information, the holy Qur'an declares in response of Prophet Sulayman to Hud-hud that brought information to him that: '..... we shall see whether you are of truth or you are among the liars.' Qur'an 27:27

Conclusion

The rate at which malicious information are spread about one religion or denomination and the other on social media is worrisome, alarming and call for immediate attention because, it serves as bane through which progress is debarred in Nigeria. This paper identified that misinformation, propaganda, rumour and malicious spread of news are all aberration and infringement on the fundamental rights of other denomination or religion. It enumerated causes of misinformation, rumour, malicious spread of information among religious adherents to include idleness, assassination of character, wrong thinking, monetary/material gains among others while pinpointing the problems of the act to include breaking of tie, grudges, enmity, retaliation, physical confrontation among others. It therefore advocated that principle of Islamic inquiry contained in Qur'an 49: 6 – 9 among others should be explored to combat the menace of malicious information among religiosity in our society.

Recommendations

From the findings, analysis and discussion above, this paper therefore recommends that:

1. The principle of convergent rather than divergent enshrined in the holy books should be adopted by both Muslims and Christians as contained in Qur'an 3:64 and Isaiah 1:18
2. There should be a pressure group from each religion that will responsible for calling the members of their faith that are spreading malicious information about other denomination or religion to order to foster unity.
3. The headship of both formidable religions (Christian Association of Nigeria and Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs) should be empowered to sanction any transgressor that spreads false information about other denomination or religion,
4. A group should be appointed across the states and local governments of the federation comprises of the two prominent religions (Christianity and Islam) to responsible for ideal practices and monitor the situation taking a clue from Lagos NIREC (Nigeria inter-Religious Council) that has been extended to all the fifty-seven local government and local development areas across the state.
5. The system of evangelism should be checkmated in ensuring that ideal practice are preached about other denominations or religion rather than personal notion that may against the doctrine of such denominations or religion.
6. The spirit of brethren should be brought to limelight between the two religions to arouse principle of inquiry from horse's mouth rather than relying on propaganda, misinformation and holding issues against an innocent soul

References

- Al-Attas, S. N (1977). *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*. Jeddah: King Abdul-Aziz University
- Balogun, M. A, Kolawole, H. A & Oseni, J. A (2019). *Islamic Education and Electronic Social Media (ESM). The twin-potent tools for Peaceful Co-existence in Nigeria*. In *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* Vol. III, No. 1. A publication of School of Arts and Social Sciences, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos
- Elizabeth, W (2008). *Cambridge Advanced Learners' Dictionary*. 3rd edition. Cambridge University Press
- Kareem, B. Y (2020). *Combating Fake News in the Digital Age in Nigeria: Islamic Perspective*. In *Journal of Religions & Peace Studies* Vol. 4, No. 2. A Publication of the Department of Religions and Peace Studies, Faculty of Arts, Lagos State University, Ojo
- Luno, (2017). *What is the Meaning of Social Media?* Retrieved on 3rd of July, 2021. [http://www.quora.com/What is the meaning of social media](http://www.quora.com/What-is-the-meaning-of-social-media)
- Manning, J (2014). *Social Media: Definition and Classes of Social Media*. In K. Harvey (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Social Media and Politics* (pp. 1158 – 1162)
- Oseni, J. A and Balogun, I. I (2020). *Religious Propaganda via Electronic Social Media: Implication for Peaceful Coexistence*. In Paramole, K. O, Salisu, M. T and Johnson-Bashua, A (2020). *Interrogating Problematic Issues in the Humanities and Education: A Gedenkshrift for Prof. Abdul-Lateef Mobolaji Adetona*
- Turnbull, J (2010). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary: International Student's Edition*. Oxford University Press