Credibility Of Rural Ulama In Dealing With Hoaks

Dadang Sugiana[1], Ira Mirawati[2], Putri Trulline[3]

[1,2,3]*Communication Management, Universitas Padjadjaran*
E-mail: dadang.sugiana@unpad.ac.id, ira.mirawati@unpad.ac.id,
putri.trulline@unpad.ac.id

ABSTRACT: Credibility determines how a person influence people'sopinion and behavior. All public figures, including ulama, require high credibility. In the digital era, can ulama provide legit information and play a role in warding off hoaxes circulating through digital media? This study used a descriptive method with interview as a data collection tool. The research informants were fifteen Quran recitation members aged 30-70 years in Parigi District, Pangandaran Regency. The results showed that, unlike the internet news,people in rural areas still consider ulama opinion leaders. Ulama only confirm internet hoax if the members of the Quran recitation ask about it.However, the source of their knowledge is not the internet, but the Quran and Al Hadits. The members of the recitation did not make the ulama the first to ask about the truth of news on the internet. It can be concluded that the high credibility of scholars deals with real-life problems but not with issues that develop on the internet.

Keywords: Hoax, Social Media, Opinion leader, Ulama.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ulama played an important role in various sectors of people's lives in the conventional era. They are role modelswith power of knowledge . Ulama have two roles:first, normative role, a role that have been determined before a person occupies a certain position in society;second, ideal role,a role which is expected from someone of great authority.

M. Quraish Shihab states that there are at least four roles on the shoulders of the scholars, including *tablīgh*, *tabayyun*, *tahkīm* and *uswah*(Shihab, 1992; Lukmani and Khairuldini, 2017). Through *tablīgh*, ulama convey the meaning of Islam, teach the essence of religion, and provide Islamic education to the community. Meanwhile, with *tabayyun*, they interpret or explain the Qur'an, define and teach the Hadiths of the Prophet to the public. Through *tahkīm*, they explore the sources of Islamic law in order to make legal decisions and certainty. Through *uswah*, they make themselves public figures. They have even driven Indonesian politics. They play the role of opinion leaders in the context of development communication(Burhaduddin, 2013). However, Indonesia has entered the digital era. Many socio-cultural aspects have changed drastically. Digital media is thought addictive that it makes people put media first and ignore others. People tend to start leaving togetherness, kinship, and warm social ties. They can do anything independently, including seeking religious knowledge (Ngafifi, 2014). Thus, the questionsare: what is the role of the ulama

today?How is the credibility of the ulama today in regard to the issues circulating on the internet?

Hiroko Horikoshi's research in West Java (Zuhrah, 2015: 32) revealed that the gerastest role and support of ulama in the New Order era were defending citizens' beliefs. They teach religious knowledgeand religious orthodoxy practices to the Muslims. In addition, some ulama with great influence were drawn to play a secondary role in political practices. Some of them did it purely for public interests, but some are likely only a political tool of those who seek power.

Ulama are the opinion leaders public in a village.Information exchange varies from economic problems to development. However, it is likely that their role and function will gradually change when the internet (including social media) has a tremendous power, which may lead to the creation of public opinion(Hafiduddin, 2014).

Village has a reciprocal relationship between its elements. The interactions that exist may lead them to undergo some changes. The changes in rural communities are not only in environment but also in individuals or communities(Subiakto, 2013). Rural communities have been known as people who promote camaraderie. They put fellowship and harmony first. Theyhave a personal relationship. They know each other intimately. They share joy and sorrow and have a high sense of mutual trust and support. This kind of relationship emerges as rural communities have close lineages. There is a kinship among its members. Rural communities have a high customary unity and beliefs. Not only that, their cooperationsand land ownerships are based on fraternity. They do various works together.They farm, build houses, roads, and bridges, and other works in mutual cooperations. All of these are the characteristics of villagers. They have a crystallization of culture with sublime local wisdom(Suparman, 2012).

Local wisdom in rural communities emergesfrom the interaction between residents who live with local pure values and virtues. New media and the opening of social networks with outsiders will usually bring changes, either in a more positive or negative direction(Hadiyat, 2014).

New Media or digital media can be defined as an internet-based communication medium (Ngafifi, 2014; Kemp and Simon, 2019). This new media is flexible and can be accessed anywhere as long as an internet network is available. In contrast to the one-way nature of conventional mass media, new media is interactive. It can be used privately for a limited circle or overtly for a wider public. Why is that? New media was born from the digitization of various analog technologies. It was born from the development of technology and science, and it continues to advance with more and more countries and industries.Its vision is to develop a better and easier future for human life. It is about how to make everything that was originally manual become automatic,and everything that started out complicated or difficult become concise and easy.

Currently, digital technology has been essential, which is difficult to separate from people's lives in modern age(Subiakto, 2013). New media is technologically complex because it consists of various elements. Therefore, this media is often referred to as convergent media because it is able to combine various media elements into one. However, this complexity is made to present a technology to make human life easier (Ngafifi, 2014). As a result, today people can do almost everything, from sending messages, doing transactions, to accessing

transportation by simply touching their cellphones(Mirawati and Karimah, 2015; Priyandana, 2018).

Along with the development of new media, the characteristics of village have gradually changed. The new media also dragged villages into the "global village" which no longer have boundaries. The World Wide Web (www) as the embryo of all internet-based services is an open, flexible and dynamic information environment. Media development changes the existing culture,replacing the old culture with a new one, either due to information brought by the new media or the media itself. However, the new media also produces "the new opinion leader"(Sun and Bin, 2018), namely celebrities in cyberspace, including religious teachers or *ustadz* on the internet. But what about ulama in rural areas, will they still be considered important?

Previous research conducted by Liza Dwi Ratna Dewi shows that difficulties in understanding the new cultures can be one of the obstacles to progress(Dewi, 2015). Robby Darwis Nasution found in his research that another thing that hinders the ability of rural communities to keep pace with the progress of the digital era is the gap in human resources. Opinion leaders in rural areas are not skilled enough to spread new knowledge to society. Unfortunately, village leaders are not optimizing digital media, even though theyhave access to the tools. Internet users in rural areas are dominated by teenagers(Subiakto, 2013). The fact that the government -and the private sector have not played their role in improving the digital literacy level of rural communities and the assumption that control of digital media also contribute to the low utilization of digital media by rural communities (Hadiyat, 2014).

This research onthe role of credibility of Ulama in rural areas in dealing with hoax information will describe the perceptions of the members of Quran recitation on the credibility of ulama based on aspects of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness.

2. METHOD

Using descriptive method, this study was conducted by interviewing fifteen informants. They are the members of a recitation group in Parigi District, Pangandaran Regency. Parigi District, Pangandaran Regency. This location was chosen because it is a rural area with a good internet access. This village has an internet network with good signal quality and lots of wifi points. This place has received an internet grant from Google, especially for its schools.

The ages of the informants varied from 30 to -78 years old. Data were analyzed and presented descriptively. Interviews were conducted by bringing the members of the group to the Desa Cinta Ratu sub-district office. Invitations for interviews were made and distributed by Parigi District staff. Through this method, researchers were able to obtain in-depth information about how they played their roles and functions in dealing with hoaxesthey receive.

The interview was done with the following techniques: informal conversation and general-guidlined. Even though the interviews were conducted informally, wheresometimes the informants did not think that they were being interviewed, the researchers also provided general guidelines,comprising a set of questions for the informants. This was to ensure that the interview will get the required data .

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Ulama are the opinion leaders who are looked up by their public or followers in a village.The information exchange varies from economic problems to development. However, it is likely that their role and function will gradually change when the internet (including social media) has tremendous power, which may lead to the creation of public opinion.

Respondents of this study were the members of As-Sakinah recitation.They were between 35 and 70 years old. Most of the members are as housewives and small traders.

The members conducted the Quran recitationonce in a week. Most of them already have smartphones, and they utilize the features and applications. However, some of them don't have ones.They use the smatphones for making phonecalls, taking pictures, listening to music, playing games, and even engaging in social media. WhatsApp and Facebook are the ones they use the most.

Table 1. Features Used

Feature	Percentage
Phonecall	80%
Camera	75%
SMS	75%
Internet	40%
Listening to Music	35%

Whatsapp (70%) is the most widely used medium for getting in touch with family, alumni, or PKK groups. Furthermore, 40% of recitation members use Facebook, and the remaining 15% use Line Messenger. Being active in social media, the respondents also often share information they get from the internet with their peer groups via WhatsApp group or Facebook group.

Table 2. The Use of Social Media

Social Media	Percentage
WhatsApp	70%
Facebook	40%
Line Messenger	15%

Table 3.Involvement in WhatsApp group of Quran Recitation

WhatsApp Group	Percentage
Yes	60%
No	40%

Sixty percent of respondents stated that they had a whatsapp recitation group, while the rest 40% no. However, there are some recitation members who neither have smartphones nor use social media and are not aware of the recitation group on Whatsapp, Facebook, or Blackberry Messenger.With access to social media at their fingertips, our respondents easily

follow various issues on social media. It can be noticed that 70% of members follow the issues,where in this context includes reading news via smartphones, watching videos on YouTube, and sharing information they get via WhatsApp or Facebook status. Respondents also share information they consider important to their families via WhatsApp groups.

Table 4. Consulting to Ustadz/ustadzah

Consulting	Percentage
Yes	30%
No	70%

Based on data from the field, 70% of the community did not consult the ustadz/ustadzah about issues circulating in the community. Only 30% of them did. However, this is understandable because the respondent said that the recitation session only discussed issues related to religion or went straight to religious lectures. Women and ustadz/ustadzah do not spend much time to discuss other issues outside the religious realm.

In line with the previous question, it was found that 70% of the ustadz/ustadzah did not respond to issues developing in society. This is understandable because the respondents did not consult beforehand. However, 30% of respondents admitted that the ustadz/ustadzah responded according to their capacity as a religious leader. They often quote verses from the Quran or Hadith to provide explanations about the issues being discussed. The community mostly discussed issues about juvenile delinquency, the law of cooperative savings and loans, and loan sharks Ustadz or Kaji teachers .

Table 5.Consulting to others

Consulting Parties	Percentage
Midwife	50%
Friend	45%
Family	40%

Other trusted parties to consult on issues circulating on the internet are midwives (50%) on health, friends (45%) on social, political, or other issues developing in the community, and also family (40 %) as the closest people.

Table 6.Trustworthiness to Ulama or internet

Trustworthy	Percentage
Ustadz/Ustadzah	95%
Internet	5%

The next question is about the level of trust in the ustadzah/ustadzah and the belief in issues on the internet. It can be noticed that 95% of respondents trust religious leaders because of their credibility, rather than believing in unaccountable issues on the internet. Most of respondents said they believed in someone who could be held accountable for their sentences and words. It was also found that 5% of respondents stated that they believed in the

internet on some topics. They will believe in religious leaders if the topics are related to the religion.

Source Credibility Theory from Hovland, Janis, and Kelly, which was developed in 1953, explained that the audience may be easier to persuade if the communicator has sufficient credibility. The audience will usually trust and tend to receive well the messages conveyed by people who have credibility in their fields. There are three aspects that affect the credibility of the source(Umeogu, 2012; Sigar, Londa and Tulung, 2017), namely trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness.

Trustworthiness is a public assessment that the source of information is considered sincere, wise and fair, objective, has personal integrity, and has high social responsibility. Generally, the assessment is made based on the source's past behavior and the presumption of his current behavior.In other words, a person's track record will be a reference whether the person is considered having trustworthiness or not. Consistency is also one of the criteria for reliability.The audience believes in the attitude of a consistent figure, and on the contrary distrusts an inconsistent figure.

Regarding the 'hoax' news, the recitation members still respond with traditional thoughts. In order not to receive further and unaccountable influence, they simply adhere to their beliefs about the right or wrong of the issue. From their experience and knowledge, they choose to decide for themselves which issues can be trusted or not. A case in point is the issue of imported salts containing broken glass. These women of As-Sakinah recitation will believe more what they think for themselves. In addition, for issues with a larger scale of influence, local residents tend to only discuss them without following them up, or it can be said that they are 'just gossip', and just chat to spend time while waiting for the recitation. When the ustadz or the Koran teacher came, they did not try to ask or discuss it as well.

In regard to the role of the ustadz as a conveyor of information, they said that the ustadz/ustadzah played an important role and was still very much needed as a 'mouthpiece of community'.From here it can be noticed that ustadz is a channel of information from various parties and still has a big influence on society. They also said that the direct delivery of information by the government was deemed necessary but still contributed to the clergy in it.

Expertise is the skill factor relates to the assessment in which the source is considered proficient in the field. Expertise can be in the form of knowledge or skills in a particular field. From the point of view of features and applications of the smartphones these women have, it turns out that they use them for making phonecalls, taking pictures, listening to music, playing games, and engaging in social media. From vast options of social media, they mostly use WhatsApp and Facebook.

The recitation membersusually use social media for enjoying entertainment and finding out information. Sometimes when they thought they found important information, they will share it with their friends via WhatsApp groups. The members of As-Sakinah are familiar with WhatsApp groups.According to the data of this study, these women mostly engagein family groups, gymnastics groups, alumni groups, tambourine groups, and indeed the recitation group itself. For issues circulating in theirneighborhood, the women tend to trust in relevant experts rather than statements from the ustadz/ustadzah. For example, on the issue of how teenagers live today, they will consult directly with school teachers. Furthermore, on the issue

of human trafficking,they also obtained it from informants rather than ustadz. It is uncommon for health service providers, such as midwives, *posyandu*, *puskesmas*, to provide counseling on the issue of domestic violence as well as cervical cancer tests. After getting the information, a discussion of an issue might lead to a casual discussion (chatting)at the end of the recitation . If it is not possible to disseminate information face to face, some members use their social media (WhatsApp) to forward it to other parties to see what they know about it.

Apart from using social media as a medium for communication, membersof Majlis Ta'lim Al-Hikmah also use social media as a medium to find, add, and get information,even though there are still many members who rely on television as a medium to get information. Thesemembers are currently followingan issue about plastic rice, where an amateur video shows rice from a restaurant is shaped to resemble a ball as big as an adult's fist, and when it's thrown on the table, the rice bounces like a tennis ball. The second issue they follow is about FIRST travel that had deceived the prospective congregation and took away billions of money. Other issues they followed were about the Saracen case, child kidnapping, and new modes of fraud.

The role of ustadz/ustadzah as religious leaders in Majlis Ta'lim Al-Hikmah seems to be still recognized by the local population, particularly the members of Majlis Ta'lim Al-Hikmah. This is evidenced by the members of Majlis Ta'lim Al-Hikmah who are still consulting with ustadz/ustadzah in their area about daily problems and the latest issues on social media.

Some of the topics to discuss and consult were children's education, juvenile delinquency, the law on cooperative loan and loan sharks, and Rohingya Muslims. The local ustadz/ustadzah usually does not confirm or deny the circulating issue right away, but he/she responds it by explaining the relevant hadiths and arguments. Then the ustadz/ustadzah will give guidance and advice to the audience on what to do in response to the problem at hand or the current issue. The members of Majlis Ta'lim Al-Hikmah also tend to trust in words from the ustadz/ustadzah more than information from social media.They say that the ustadz/ustadzah are considered more competent in conveying information because he/she obtainsthe knowledge from the Quran, Hadith, and Dalil. Meanwhile, the internet is not always considered valid because it may load a lot of unaccountable information.

In addition to the ustadz/ustadzah, the women of Majlis Ta'lim Al-Hikmah also used to consult with family, friends, midwives, teachers and posyandu cadres. They will choose which one they think is more competent to consult with based on the problems they face. For example, they will choose to consult with a midwife about health, a teacher about their children's education, and so on.

Attractiveness in general is a concept includes physical appearance and psychological identification.Attraction is different from charisma. A person may be attractive, but not charismatic. Conversely, a person maybe charismatic, but he holds different values and thus he is not attractiveto be psychologically identified by other people.

4. CONCLUSION

In order to successfully spread Islamic knowledge in this modern era, the use of digital media is a must. New media encourages all users to have a will and be able to develop new knowledge, which is different from "traditional" media or mere face-to-face communication. This digital media also makes people easier to involve in a democratic world through more

interactive sharing and empowerment. Communication is no longer one-way. Village communities can be influenced, and actually influence. The relationships in new media are reciprocal.

The different characteristics of the internet adopted by rural communities have brought changes and differences in not only the communication behavior of rural communities but also the roles and functions of their elements, including the ulama. In Two Step Flow Communication Theory, put forward by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Barelson, and Hazel Gaudet, these scholars should not only be the doors of knowledge, but also opinion leaders and decision makers. Theoretically, information is considered flowing from the media to individuals with great access to media, and then they pass their interpretation about it to the others.

5. LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

This study has several limitations, including the location or respondents is small. In addition, the future research needs to be done to larger respondents or in others rural location.

6. REFERENCES

[1] Burhaduddin, J. (2013) *Ulama dan Kekuasaan: Pergumulan Elite Muslim dalam Sejarah Indonesia*. Bandung: Mizan Digital Publishing.

[2] Dewi, L. D. R. (2015) 'Kearifan Lokal "Jagad Cilik Jagad Gedhe" sebagai Doktrin Komunikasi Pembangunan Berkelanjutan', *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 3(2), pp. 146–162.

[3] Hadiyat, Y. D. (2014) 'Kesenjangan Digital di Indonesia (Studi Kasus di Kabupaten Wakatobi)', *Pekommas*, 17(2), pp. 81–90. Available at: https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/222391-kesenjangan-digital-di-indonesia-studi-k.pdf.

[4] Hafiduddin (2014) 'Ulama dan Pelaksanaan Syariat Islam Di Aceh', *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembangunan*. Medan: UINSU, 1(2), pp. 33–48.

[5] Kemp and Simon (2019) *Digital 2019: Indonesia*, *Dare Portal*. Available at: https://datareportal.com.

[6] Lukmani, N. H. Z. and Khairuldini, K. F. wan (2017) 'Peranan dan Sumbangan Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama Kepada Masyarakat Aceh', in *Proceedings ISLAC 2017: The Social Harmony Through Islamic Law*.

[7] Mirawati, I. and Karimah, K. El (2015) *Pemanfaatan Media Digital Oleh Masyarakat Perdesaan di Kabupaten Sumedang Provinsi Jawa Barat*.

[8] Ngafifi, M. (2014) 'Advances in Technology and Patterns of Human Life in Socio-Cultural Perspective', *Jurnal Pembangunan Pendidikan: Fondasi dan Aplikasi*, 2(1), pp. 33–47. Available at: http://journal.uny.ac.id/index.php/jppfa/article/viewFile/2616/2171.

[9] Priyandana, A. (2018) *Perilaku konsumen digital di Indonesia.*, *Mmrketing.co.id*. Available at: https://marketing.co.id/perilaku-konsumen-digital-indonesia/.

[10] Shihab, M. Q. (1992) *Membumikan Al-Qur'an, Fungsi dan Peran Wahyu Dalam*

Kehidupan Masyarakat. Bandung: Mizan.

[11] Sigar, H. S., Londa, H. and Tulung, L. E. (2017) 'PERSEPSI JEMAAT TERHADAP KREDIBILITAS PELAYAN KHUSUS SEBAGAI KOMUNIKATOR', *Acta Diurna*, VI(3), pp. 1–13.

[12] Subiakto, H. (2013) 'Internet untuk pedesaan dan pemanfaatannya bagi masyarakat The usage of internet for the village and villagers', *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan dan Politik*, 26(4).

[13] Sun, G. and Bin, S. (2018) 'A new opinion leaders detecting algorithm in multi-relationship online social networks', *Multimedia Tools and Applications*, 77(4), pp. 4295–4307. doi: 10.1007/s11042-017-4766-y.

[14] Suparman, A. (2012) *Desa dan Hak-Hak Tradisional*. Available at: http://ejournal.sthb.ac.id/index.php/wawasanhukum/article/view/28/28 (Accessed: 10 February 2017).

[15] Umeogu, B. (2012) 'Source Credibility: A Philosophical Analysis', *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 02(02), pp. 112–115. doi: 10.4236/ojpp.2012.22017.