SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL IN DISSEMINATING INFORMATION ON ISLAM AT HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

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Abstract

The issue of social media has been largely discussed among the scholars and intellectuals all over the world. There are a lot of strategies and mechanisms have been made by scholars through different ideas and approaches to ensure the authenticity of information on Islam available on social media. During this era of globalization, the Muslim youths have great access to social media in search of information but not all have good knowledge about Islam and able to differentiate or determine the authenticity of information on Islam. It is important for Muslim youths to be guided and attentive towards information posted on social media. The objective of this study is to analyse undergraduate students' level of awareness and respond towards information on Islam available on social media. Data was gathered by distributing questionnaire to undergraduate students from higher educational institutions in Brunei Darussalam. One of the findings also confirmed on the importance to have a systematic framework created by the government and society as a whole to counter social media threats and issues specifically information on Islam.

Keywords: *social media, Undergraduate students, Higher educational institutions, information on Islam, Muslim youths*

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 20th century, social media (SM) is a global phenomenon and has become a tool in disseminating any information such as marketing, development, education including information on Islam. SM becomes a popular medium of communication among the young generation worldwide. SM are primarily used as a means for young people to communicate and provide them with a wide range of information virtually all of the time. The present youth are technology savvy and the most interactive generation are in their virtual world.

There is a shift in paradigm on the transmission of information on Islam which is from classical method (face to face) to printing, and nowadays, virtual learning through SM. This indicates that there is a gradual evolution for Muslims to transmit and obtain information on Islam. Flow of information including on Islam is limitless through SM with the development of information communication technology (ICT).

Moreover, SM enables people to share all sorts of information on Islam and communicating with each other in an online community. Thus, Islam welcomes such advancement. Overtime, with the evolution of SM, virtual educational interactions has occurred among the students through SM as part of their learning tool.

With the evolution of SM, the world's great scholars from different religious sect are on Twitter, YouTube and Instagram which allows information on Islam to become extremely accessible by all. Evidently, the consequence of the flourishing of authentic Islamic knowledge is that the young generation of Muslims can obtain knowledge about Islam and their faith easily in compare to their parents who did not have the same access to obtain information on Islam through SM.

In relation to youths in NBD, with the availability of information on Islam in SM, this will offer great advantage for the youth to deepen their faith as Muslims as vast knowledge about Islam is available for them to explore and learn.

NBD USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA (SM) IN NBD

According to Authority for Info-communications Technology Industry of Brunei Darussalam (AITI) report in 2016, there is an increase in total household internet access which is 67% in 2013 to 75% in 2016 as shown in Figure 1.2. This indicate that there is a large number of people who have access to the SM in NBD over 6 years.
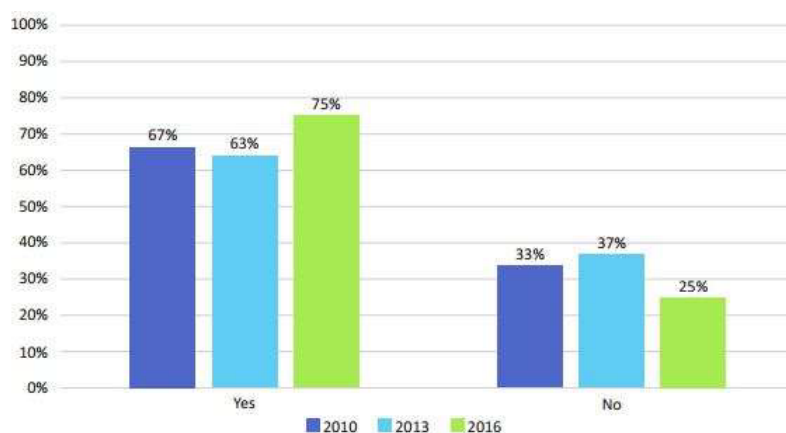

Figure 1.1: Household Internet Access based on Brunei Darussalam Household
ICT survey 2016 done by AITI

As it can be seen in Figure 1.1, there is an increase in total household internet access (75%) in 2016. Relating this information to Figure 1.2 which highlighted the three top household internet activities among Brunei society; seeking information and general knowledge (78.6%), messaging and teleconferencing (74.4%) and social media (71.1%).
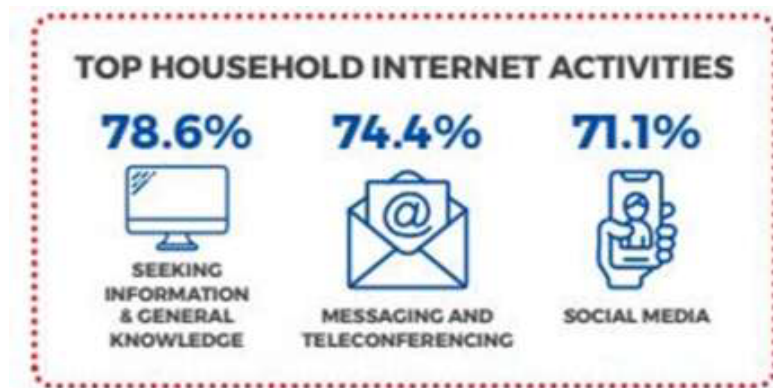
Figure 1.2: Top household internet activities based on Negara Brunei Darussalam
Household ICT survey 2019 done by AITI

While Figure 1.2 has indicated that the highest activities (78.6%) for using internet is to seek information and general knowledge among the population in NBD (based on 2,622respondents).7 This further infers that there is a pressing need to assess the current trend on flow of information on Islam through SM among Muslims in NBD

Based on AITI household report in 2019 as shown in Figure 1.3, the top three social media application are Facebook (92%), Instagram (87%) and Twitter (49%). This has shown that there is high number of Bruneian society who use social media applications as their tool to communicate with others, disseminate information and for general knowledge.

Figure 1.3: Top 3 Social Media Apps based on Brunei Darussalam Household
ICT survey 2019 done by AITI

METHODOLOGY

Research on information on Islam in relation to SM seemed to be very few and studies on the perspectives of undergraduate students in Universities of NBD are even fewer. This paper therefore, aims to analyse undergraduate students' level of awareness and respond towards information on Islam available on social media. In today's society, SM has become the major public sphere of communication among its users in spreading news and information. SM network sites and technologies make it easier to disseminate information on Islam by uploading images and videos.

According to Stober and Hansmann, tools are commonly use in ICT in order to deal with flexibility of software development such as span software development, code version control system, test environment, project administration tools, and documentation tools. For this paper, "tool" refers to means of information on Islam disseminating through SM.

While the main actor is the undergraduate students who are the recipient of information on Islam available on SM. Next, the scope of this paper is four different higher educational institutions in NBD which are University Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA), University Brunei Darussalam (UBD), University Technology Brunei (UTB) and Seri Begawan Religious Teachers University College (KUPUSB).

In addition, data was gathered by distributing questionnaires to undergraduate students from higher educational institutions in Brunei Darussalam which is randomly distributed to hundred (100) undergraduate students over four main universities in NBD evenly. The intact group is the undergraduate students who are local Muslims (Bruneian nationality) and an equal number of gender to avoid any gender discrimination.

FINDINGS

Foremost, the quantitative results from questionnaires provide evidence of the perceived religious values and experiences of undergraduate students towards information on Islam available on SM. The completed questionnaires were imported into SPSS, a quantitative software for analysis and coding based on common theme that emerged from the data. A summary from the questionnaire results are illustrated and discuss below.

a) Use of SM in everyday life

For respondents' preference in using SM, most respondents stated they use SM every day in compare to a very minimal respondents who contrarily have disagreed to have done so as presented in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4: Use of SM in everyday life

University	Use of SM in everyday life	
	Yes (%)	No (%)
UTB	96	4
UBD	98	0
KUPUSB	97	1
UNISSA	91	4

b) Reasons of using SM

Respondents also needs to choose all that apply to their purpose in using SM from multiple options provided; exchanged information with peers, source of news and information, social interaction, learning entertainment and research. Most respondents have chosen to exchange information with peers and as source of news and information as shown in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5: Reasons for using SM

University	Exchanged Information	News and Information
	%	
UTB	80	87
UBD	82	94
KUPUSB	55	87
UNISSA	68	83

c) Receive and disseminate information on Islam through SM

Table 1.6: Receive and disseminate information on Islam through SM

University	Receive		Disseminate	
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)
UTB	76	24	74	24
UBD	65	33	61	37
KUPUSB	66	32	65	33
UNISSA	74	21	68	27

Table 1.6 presents a summary of respondents' preference in using SM as their tool in receiving and disseminating information on Islam. Majority of respondents prefer to receive and disseminate information on Islam through SM.

d) Types of SM used

Majority of respondents from four universities have chosen Instagram (78% to 93%) in compare to Twitter and YouTube which available as their main types of SM used as shown in Table 1.7. While YouTube (79% to 90%) is the 2nd highest type of SM used by most respondents. The least favorite among respondents is Twitter (33% to 65%). This infer that Instagram is the most popular type of SM used by majority of respondents.

Table 1.7: Types of SM used

University	Types of SM used		
	Instagram	Twitter	YouTube
UTB	93	48	86
UBD	90	65	90
KUPUSB	78	33	79
UNISSA	87	52	81

e) Recipient of information on Islam

The majority of respondents indicated that they use SM to disseminate information on Islam to their friends rather than to their family, colleague and strangers. Nonetheless, majority of respondents from UTB prefer to disseminate information on Islam to their family in compare to others as presented in Table 1.8. This is also in line with method of *da'wah* in Islam where Almighty Allah command Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) to start calling Islam among his family members first.

Table 1.8: Recipient of information on Islam

University	Recipient of information on Islam			
	Family	Friends	Colleague	Strangers
UTB	78	69	44	16
UBD	53	58	32	11
KUPUSB	61	66	47	20
UNISSA	64	73	53	29

f) Respond towards information on Islam

Highest number of respondents prefer to clarify information on Islam available on SM before disseminate it to others as shown in table 1.9. A small percentage of respondents prefer to ignore such information when available on SM range from 11% to 21%. In KUPUSB, more than half of the respondents (61%) prefer to clarify information on Islam available on SM in compare to respondents from UTB, UBD and UNISSA. Due to their religious courses offered and frequent interaction with their religious educators can be the reasons behind their choice.

In compare to respondents from UTB and UBD who have minimal religious courses offered, hence, about 35%-35% of respondents rather simply copy information on Islam available on SM.

Table 1.9: Respond towards information on Islam

University	Respond towards information on Islam		
	Simply copy	Clarify	Ignore
UTB	35	54	11
UBD	36	41	21
KUPUSB	23	61	14
UNISSA	25	55	15

It is important for all Muslim to do clarification on information related to Islam as mentioned in the *al-Quran* which says, "do not follow that of which you have no knowledge for you shall be questioned for (the use) of your eyes, ears and minds" (al-Quran, *Surah Al-Isra* (17):36). Therefore, Allah disgraces the believers who spread fabricated information which they didn't have knowledge about it. In other words, the *al-Quran* emphasizes the importance of truth in disseminating information to others.

In the same vein, the importance of disseminating truthful information is also shown in *hadith*: it is written in *Sahih al-Bukhari* thus "Do not tell a lie against me for whoever tells a lie against me (intentionally) then he will surely enter the Hell-fire." Henceforth, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) already remind his people to say nothing but the truth and the place for liars are in the Hell-fire.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the data findings from questionnaire participants revealed that there are possibility among youth in NBD didn't have the knowledge about the existence of non-endorsed information available on SM which can influence their mind and perhaps deviate from the right teaching of Islam. Evidently, majority of questionnaire participants prefer SM as their tool to receive and disseminate information on Islam due to easy access from their mobile and laptops.

Finally, this paper produces a completely different type of literature that helps to generate an understanding for authority in NBD in tackling the issue of non-endorsed information on SM which can influence youth in NBD and its possibility which will affect their faith as a Muslim. One of the findings also confirmed on the importance to have a systematic framework created by the government and society as a whole to counter social media threats and issues specifically information on Islam.

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