

New Media Abuse and Hoax in *Ma'na-yi Harfi* and *Ma'na-yi Ismi* Perspective: A Study of Badi'uzzaman Sa'id Nursi Thought

Adeni

UIN Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia
Email: adeni@walisongo.ac.id

Abdul Karim

UIN Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia
Email: abdulkarim@walisongo.ac.id

Osman Koroglu

The Nile University of Nigeria
Email: osman.koroglu@nileuniversity.edu.ng

Abstract

This article aims to examine the use of the *ma'na-yi harfi* (*Indicative Meaning*) and *ma'na-yi ismi* (*Nominal Meaning*) concept of Badiuzzaman Said Nursi in preventing hoaxes caused by new media abuse. The approach offered by Nursi is important because it can be considered as the basis of Islamic media communication in which moral values in media are prioritized over only material aspects. New media characterized by openness and freedom, in a certain condition, enable the hoax to spread. Hoax often occurs because the media does not prioritize morality values but leads to materially self and group fulfillment. Using the qualitative method with library data in the form of Said Nursi's *Risale-i Nûr*, we explore Nursi's views related to *ma'na-yi ismi* and *ma'na-yi harfi* in the media field. We then use his view as a basis for analyzing media hoaxes. The result is that the *ma'na-yi ismi* perspective tends to be a worldly material orientation in which communication phenomena, such as events, news, and information themselves, are understood based on the visible social contexts where media practitioners are working and oriented to fulfill self-desires. Meanwhile, in the *ma'na-yi harfi* perspective, the communication phenomenon is interpreted, constructed, and displayed with self-consideration (individual or collective self), but it is built in the

full awareness that phenomena belong to the absolute Ruler (God), and humans as the giver of meaning to those phenomena must translate the greatness of God in them. The phenomenon of communication is considered a part of the greatness of God in the universe so the hoaxes and negative messages can be avoided. The *ma'na-yi harfi* perspective can be considered as a solution to solve the social problems of hoaxes.

Keywords: Badiuzzaman Nursi, New Media, Hoax, *Ma'na-yi Ismi*, *Ma'na-yi harfi*.

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penggunaan konsep *ma'na-yi ismi* dan *ma'na-yi harfi* dari Badiuzzaman Said Nursi dalam mencegah hoaks akibat penyalahgunaan media baru. Pendekatan yang ditawarkan Nursi ini menjadi penting sebagai basis komunikasi media Islam di mana nilai-nilai moral lebih diprioritaskan dari pada aspek materi. Media baru yang bercirikan keterbukaan dan kebebasan, dalam kondisi tertentu, memungkinkan penyebaran hoax. Hoax sering terjadi karena media tidak mengutamakan nilai-nilai moralitas tetapi mengarah pada pemenuhan kepentingan diri dan kelompok. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis pada data kepustakaan berupa *Risale-i Nur*, peneliti menggali pandangan Nursi terkait *ma'na-yi ismi* dan *ma'na-yi harfi* di bidang media. Lalu, peneliti menggunakan pandangan tersebut sebagai dasar untuk menganalisis hoaks yang terjadi di media. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa perspektif *ma'na-yi ismi* cenderung berorientasi materil duniawi di mana fenomena komunikasi seperti peristiwa, berita, dan informasi, dipahami berdasarkan objek sosial yang terlihat semata. Praktisi media bekerja untuk memenuhi keinginan diri mereka sendiri. Sedangkan dalam perspektif *ma'na-yi harfi*, fenomena komunikasi tidak hanya dimaknai dengan pertimbangan individu atau kolektif, tetapi dihubungkan dengan kesadaran penuh bahwa fenomena itu adalah milik Penguasa yang mutlak, dan manusia sebagai pemberi makna atas fenomena tersebut harus menerjemahkan kebesaran Tuhan di dalamnya. Fenomena komunikasi dianggap sebagai bagian dari kebesaran Tuhan di alam semesta sehingga hoax dan pesan negatif dapat dihindarkan. Perspektif *ma'na-yi harfi* dapat menjadi solusi dalam mengatasi permasalahan sosial hoaks.

Kata Kunci: Badiuzzaman Nursi, Media Baru, Hoax, *Ma'na-yi Ismi*, *Ma'na-yi harfi*.

Introduction

Badiuzzaman Sa'id Nursi (1878-1960) was one of the modern Turkish thinkers who contributed more to developing Islamic thoughts in the modern era.¹ His thoughts attached many aspects, both theological and social, including media morality issues. The media advanced at his time is not as media developing nowadays where new media dominate all the sectors. Nevertheless, he was taking part in providing some particular media principles that can be applied in responding to hoax issues spread of social media or new media. It is known that spreading the hoax can impact the horizontal conflict in social life.

Among the considerable Badi'uzzaman thoughts are regarding *ma'na-yi harfi* dan *ma'na-yi ismi* perspectives.² Both of these approaches have their distinctiveness in framing media practice. Said Nursi in his time appreciated the presence of the media as a gift from God and should be used to spread the morals of the Qur'an. Meanwhile, on the other hand, Nursi rejected the media which he called as a means of Satan and Dajjal to mislead people. His effort to view the media as a gift from God implies the necessity to orient all media content to God by prioritizing moral values, benefiting, and not harming others. This is the form of *ma'na-yi harfi* in media, as opposed to *ma'na-yi ismi* which implies purely physical-material aspects.

This article specifically will discuss media morality using the *ma'na-yi harfi* approach and *ma'na-yi ismi* based on "ana." The advancement of new media is a challenge for the world of communication and information. On the one hand, new media can facilitate access to information and connectivity among people and provide convenience in many daily activities. However, on the other hand, new media raises morality issues that are not simple in people's lives. Misuse of the media for irresponsible matters makes the presence of new media very problematic. Among the problems of new media that are often in contact with morality is the spread of hoax news. Hoaxes are messages originating from unclear or invalid sources. It is often used to target certain conditions in society by muddying the atmosphere, causing panic, and diverting a developing issue. Hoaxes

¹ Necati Aydin, *Said Nursi and Science in Islam: Character Building through Nursi's Mana-i harfi*, (New York: Routledge, 2019).

² Alparslan Acikgenc, *Islamic Scientific Tradition in History*, (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit IKIM Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (IKIM) 2, 2014).

are instant and easily viral from one media to another. Its bombastic narrative can disturb each person to respond and even drift away. Furthermore, according to Yunus,³ social media, which is part of new media, has become a vehicle for hate speech in the form of provocation to destructive actions. It is following the West ways of using media in which with its secularized worldview regards religious values as unimportant,⁴ so the bad things can occur.

In the context of these issues of media morality, Nursi's thoughts on *ma'na-yi harfi* and *ma'na-yi ismi* based on 'ana' (self) could help analyze the existence of media hoaxes. It all centers on "ana," which is the determining point for human activities. "Ana" as the center of human activity control can encourage them to be good and bad, including in communication activities and disseminating information on social media. "Ana," which is carried out with the *ma'na-yi harfi* approach, can produce an essential, substantive, and moral communication activity in which it is centered on the name of God, namely *al-Hakim* (*The Wisest*) and *al-Nâfi'* (*The Most Beneficial*). With these two names of Him, humans can display wise messages, informative, and useful. Media activists will compile communication messages by interpreting and constructing any seen and heard empirical data by focusing on the existence of the data themselves and seeing them as the manifestations of God. Simultaneously, the *ma'na-yi ismi* approach based on the existence of matter itself sees that material or empirical data is the only source of information. The messages constructed are only running with the interests of bad "ana" and leading to self-fulfillment/satisfaction, and forgetting the essence of the benefits of empirical data revealed by God.

This article will answer the following questions; what forms of hoaxes are happening in the media? What is Nursi's view of communication media in his works? How is the analysis of *ma'na-yi harfi* and *ma'na-yi ismi* based on "ana" regarding the problem of media hoaxes? By answering the questions, the article is expected to solve media morality issues and particularly be useful for forming the Islamic communication model instead of general communication.

³ Muhammad Yunus Anis, Likha Sari Anggreni, and Eva Farhah, "Hate Speech in Arabic Language: Case Study in Instagram Comments," in *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development (JISED)*, Vol. 3, No. 10, (2018), 28–36.

⁴ Wisnu Al Amin and Maria Ulfa, "Hubungan Ilmu Pengetahuan Dan Moralitas: Analisis Problem Dan Tanggung Jawab Keilmuan," in *Tsaqafah: Jurnal Peradaban Islam*, Vol. 14, No. 1, (2018), <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v14i1.2295>.

For this reason, this study uses a qualitative method based on a literature study. The main data source is Said Nursi's own Risalah Nur. The methodological stage is *first* to explore Nursi's views regarding *ma'na-yi ismi* and *ma'na-yi harfi*. Then we explored Nursi's views regarding the existence of the media and its advancements. Finally, we use Nursi's view as a reference in seeing hoax facts as a reality that is far from moral values. Using the *ma'na-yi harfi* approach, we criticize the dominance of media practices oriented to material aspects so that they exploit information excessively and exceed limits, even though information, in Islamic communication theory, comes from God and humans are required to understand it with faith so that the dissemination of information runs in honesty, not a hoax.

Understanding the Concept of New Media and Hoax

The media is taking part very much in the process of construction of social reality. It is massively seen from the use of media in almost modern social life. Media are utilized primarily as the communication and interaction tools of society supporting their daily activities. Besides, they are also used in the economics, political, cultural, educational, and even religious sectors. In the context of overflowed information, some irresponsible acts are possible to be happening in media. It appears in the new media or online media advancement.

Mahmoud and Auter⁵ designed an online communication model called the CMC Interactivity Model. Four important elements in computer-based communication interactions, namely (1) User acts as sender and receiver, or in other words, netizens act as communicants as well as communicators; (2) Medium (media), namely the requirements for the existence of media or channels to facilitate the interaction process between users; (3) Message in the form of messages exchanged between users through the media used; (4) Communication setting, namely the environment and flexible communication time according to the wishes of the participants, considering that online communication is real-time.

New media, as online media, which is also called the second media age, greatly influences human life. Poster⁶ said that interactive

⁵ "The Interactive Nature of Computer Mediated Communication," *American Communication Journal* 11, no. 4 (2009), http://acjournal.org/journal/2009/Winter/Articles/110401%2520Interactive_Nature.pdf tanggal 23 November 2017.

⁶ Mark Poster, *The Second Media Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

technology and network communication would change society, especially the virtual world. The virtual world provides a false meeting place that expands the social world, creates new knowledge opportunities, and provides a place to share views widely.⁷ Besides, Levy's *Cyberculture* book⁸ is a well-known work on the second media age. For him, the worldwide web is an open, flexible, and dynamic information environment allowing people to develop new knowledge orientations and also engage in a democratic world of more interactive and community-based division and empowerment.

Some of the other writings focusing on the second media age is the book *The Virtual Community*⁹ by Rheingold; *Being Digital*¹⁰ by Negroponte; *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*¹¹ by Turkle; or the latest such as *New Media Theories and Practices of Digitextuality*¹² by Everett and Caldwell. The book *Mobile Communications: an Introduction to New Media*¹³ by Green and Haddon is interesting as well, seeing the existence of mobile phones or gadgets by all the social media platforms as a hallmark of the new media era. It is in line with the *New Media, Old News Journalism and Democracy in Digital Age*¹⁴ by Fenton. He saw changes in media, economic, and social technologies affect media messages and democratic processes. Therefore, Steemers¹⁵ states that broadcasts are quickly dead, and the regulation of digital media forms represents the only remaining policy challenge.

Branston and Stafford¹⁶ see that new media messages tend to be inarticulate. New media is unlike the old media, which, because

⁷ Charles Soukup, "Computer-Mediated Communication as a Virtual Third Place: Building Oldenburg's Great Good Places on the World Wide Web," *New Media and Society* 8 (2006): 421–40.

⁸ Pierre Levy, *Cyberculture* (Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 1997).

⁹ Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1994).

¹⁰ Nicolas Negroponte, *Being Digital* (New York: Knopf, 1995).

¹¹ Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of Internet* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995).

¹² Anna Everett and John T. Caldwell, *New Media Theories and Practices of Digitextuality*. (London: Routledge, 2013).

¹³ Nicola Green and Leslie Haddon, *Mobile Communications: An Introduction to New Media* (New York: Berg, 2009).

¹⁴ Natalia Fenton, *New Media, Old News Journalism and Democracy in Digital Age* (London: Sage Publications, 2010).

¹⁵ J. Steemers, "Broadcasting Is Dead. Long Live Digital Choice," in *The Medi Reader: Continuity and Transformatin* (London: Sage Publications, 2001).

¹⁶ Gill Branston and Roy Stafford, *The Media Student's Book* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 244.

it is one-way, is more likely to be controlled. Holmes¹⁷ characterizes new media with the power of interactivity and providing a space of freedom to the individual. As it is understood that through social media emphasizing interactivity, people are free to express themselves, share, and comment on a message, not infrequently even social media is used to spread hoaxes and hate speeches. Branston and Stafford¹⁸ wrote, "...a sense of public and private is being eroded, with Facebook and other sites allowing violent verbal abuse, bullying, and ignorant comment in ways that would not be allowed in a property 'public' space. There are also concerns about the global spread of pornographic discourses."

One of the faces of new media grown massively recently is social media. Social media, with its open, free, and fully interactive character, allows hoaxes to occur. Allcott and Gentzkow¹⁹ conducted a study entitled "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election." This study concludes that social media platforms such as Facebook have a very different structure from the previous media technology (mainstream media). Content on social media can be delivered between users without third party filtering, fact-checking, or editorial judgment. The average US adult reads and remembers a sequence of fake news articles during an election period, with higher exposure to pro-Trump articles than pro-Clinton articles. How much impact these election results will have depends on the effectiveness of exposure to hoaxes in changing the way people vote.

Hoax in the Oxford dictionary²⁰ is defined as a form of fraud whose purpose is to make humor or bring harm. Hoax means mockery, fake stories, and deceit. Walsh,²¹ in his book entitled "*Sins Against Science, The Scientific Media Hoaxes of Poe, Twain, and Others*," writes that the term hoax has existed since the early 1800s of the industrial revolution era in England. The origin of the word hoax is believed to have existed since hundreds of years earlier, namely "*hocus*" from the mantra "*hocus pocus*," a phrase that magicians call it, similar to "*sim*

¹⁷ David Holmes, *Teori Komunikasi, Media, Teknologi, Dan Masyarakat* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012).

¹⁸ Gill Branston and Roy Stafford, *The Media Student's Book*, 244.

¹⁹ Allcott and Gentzkow, "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election," *Report of Research*, 2017, <https://web.stanford.edu/~gentzkow/research/fakene ws.pdf>, tanggal 23 April 2017.

²⁰ "Oxford Dictionari Hoax," 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/hoax>.

²¹ L. Walsh, *The Scientific Media Hoaxes of Poe, Twain, and Others*, 2006.

sala bim.” Even Boese,²² in his book “Museum of Hoaxes,” wrote long before that, the term hoax was first published through a false almanac or calendar created by Isaac Bickerstaff in 1709 to predict the death of astrologer John Partridge.

Thus, the hoax is a word used to denote false news or an attempt to deceive or trick the reader into believing something. Since this issue is related to media morality, then the study of *ma’na-yi harfi* in terms of media is interesting to do by exploring Nursi views.

Review of *Ma’na-yi Harfi* and *Ma’na-yi Ismi* Perspective: Badi’uzzaman Said Nursi Perspective

Said Nursi authorized a monumental work, and his social movement called “Nursi movement” is developing around the world. The mentioned work is “*Risala-e Nur.*” *Risale-i Nur* is one of the most important interpretations of Islam in modern times, placing considerable emphasis on the universality of Islam.²³ Also, this book is not merely religious and theological, but rather it is a social book that can be useful as an analysis knife in solving many social problems facing the modern Turkish society at that time. The book’s presence offered the worldview providing some alternative values for daily life as opposed to the secular worldview in Turkey. This section will discuss the concept of *ma’na-yi ismi* and *ma’na-yi harfi* of Badiuzzaman Said Nursi.

Acikgenc²⁴ stated that “when sciences of different civilizations are compared and contrasted in this way, it is possible to trace the most differences to their respective perspectives as represented by their worldviews.” It seems that worldview is a foundation of science building. Nursi in his works, *Risale-i Nur*, attempted to build a worldview for Muslim life. What Nursi did is seen from his efforts to fight secularism and inculcate Islamic values. Nursi made *Risale-i Nur* not only a da’wah book but also an Islamic scientific inspiration. Therefore, he referred to the work as a meaningful interpretation of the Qur’an. *Risale-i Nur* is oriented solely to get closer to religion and not for worldly interests. He said:

²² Even Boese, *The Museum of Hoaxes. Hardcover*, 2002.

²³ Resid Haylamaz, “Islam’s Universality and the *Risale-i Nur*’s Method of Interpreting the Qur’an’s Universality,” *Tsaqafah: Jurnal Peradaban Islam* 10, no. 2 (2014), <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v10i2.188>.

²⁴ Alparslan Acikgenc, *Islamic Scientific Tradition in History*, 49.

“. also, I have proved decisively in twenty places in my defense that we would not make religion, the Qur'an, and the *Risala-I Nur* tools of anything, even in the face of the whole world, and we could not, and that we would not change a single of their truths for all the world, and that is how are in fact.”²⁵

What is the purpose of Nursi's da'wa appears in his expression as follows:

“My loyal new brothers and old prisoners! I have formed the firm conclusion that you are an important cause in our entering here in respect to Divine favor. That is to say, with its consolation and the truths of belief, *the Risale-i Nur* is to save both you from the distress of this calamity of prison and much worldly harm, and your life from passing profitlessly and in vain through grief and sorrow and being wasted on the winds of fancy, and your hereafter from weeping like your world is weeping now; it is to provide you with true solace.”²⁶

All Nursi's work is done with the *ma'na-yi harfi* (indicative meaning) approach as opposed to the *ma'na-yi ismi* (nominal meaning) approach.²⁷ In Nursi's view, the universe's book can be read with the “*ma'na-yi harfi*” approach. From the Quran's perspective, all things and events existing in this world, whether physical, social, or psychological, are signs or symbols coming from God (God) that have certain meanings and essence. In this way, God (God) is like a ruler preparing the world with signs to know He (God). Meanwhile, scientists see this world with the view of “*ma'na-yi ismi*” based only on the material itself, so they do not know the true meaning of something (Necati Aydin, 2019). The concept of *ma'na-yi harfi* can be found in the Qur'an (Surat al-'Alaq) in terms of receiving the first revelation. Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h was instructed to read three times, and what he read was signs (ayat) of God (*kawniyyah*). Therefore, it can be distinguished between the secular worldview and *the Tawhidi* worldview. The secular worldview is based on four things: word *ma'na-yi ismi*, *nazhar* through *ma'na-yi ismi*, worldly aspiration (*niyyah*), worldly outcome/satisfaction. While *tawhidi's* worldview is based on the word *ma'na-yi harfi*, *nazaar* through *ma'na-yi harfi*, otherworldly

²⁵ Said Nursi, *The Rays* (Istanbul: Sozler Publications, 2008).

²⁶ Said Nursi, *The Words*, Sozler Pub (Istanbul, 2008).

²⁷ Ibrahim M Abu-Rabi, *Spiritual Dimensions of Beduzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-I Nur* (SUNY Press, 2008).

aspiration (*niyyah*), and worldly outcomes (virtue and happiness).²⁸ Nursi used *Tawhidi* worldview as a solution for social life, opposing to a secular worldview. In fact, tawhid is the foundation for building civilization. This is in line with Hadi, Imaduddin, and Anton, in their study of the thoughts of Ismail Raja'i al-Faruqi stating that tawhîd is a primordial element as the true identity of civilization.²⁹

Nursi views that the reality of phenomena manifests God (God) by using *the ma'na-yi harfi* approach. He saw that the *ma'na-yi harfi* approach produced truths of knowledge at a high level. The *mânâ-i harfi* approach is to consider the observed phenomena as God's work and gain knowledge about the attributes of God through reading pure scientific knowledge as unveiled signs (*ayat*).³⁰ What appears in the world is clear evidence of His existence. It is different from Ibn Arabi, who saw that nature merges with God (God) through the concept of *Wahdat al-Wujud*. In Nursi's view, the reality is static, constant, and does not change, and true knowledge must refer to objective reality, as stated in the theory of correspondence. For instance, *Al-Razzaq* (the Provider)'s name requires the actual existence of beings to be provided. This way is known as subjectively-objective because it is also based on subjective experience besides being based on object phenomena.

Concerning that, Acikgenc in Aydin³¹ divides three truths: factual truth, transcendental truth, and pragmatic truth. According to Nursi, certainty or truth comes from the transcendental self (*anah*). The affirmation of the transcendental self is the key to understanding the truth of universal phenomena. The knowledge produced by the transcendental method is different from the knowledge gained based on the empirical method. The first brings us to the certainty of knowledge, while the second brings us to imitative knowledge. For Nursi, this method will produce the highest level of certainty (*Haq al-yaqîn*) through reflective knowledge (*ayn al-yaqîn*). There are three categories of certainty, namely *ilm al-yaqîn* (certainty by reason), *ayn al-yaqîn* (certainty by sight), and *haq al-yaqîn* (certainty by experience).

²⁸ Necati Aydin, *Said Nursi and Science in Islam: Character Building through Nursi's Mana-i harfi*.

²⁹ Sofian Hadi, Lalu M. Mujahid Imaduddin, and Anton, "Tawhid Sebagai Prinsip Primordial Peradaban Islam: Studi Pemikiran Isma'il Raji Al-Faruqi," *Tsaqafah: Jurnal Peradaban Islam* 15, no. 2 (2019): 265–90, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v15i2.3289>.

³⁰ Necati Aydin, *Said Nursi and Science in Islam: Character Building through Nursi's Mana-i harfi*.

³¹ *Ibid.*

These three categories relate to every effort to understand visible phenomena. A phenomenon that appears also related to the law of causation. God Himself caused everything to come into existence. Thus, the reality of objects or phenomena must exist to prove the existence of God. To claim that the reality (*haqîqah*) of beings is 'based on the Divine Names' is another way of saying that what we see when we look at an existent being is nothing but a Divine attribute of perfection that has become manifest in the visible realm.³²

As a result, the *ma'na-yi harfi* approach in science and technology relies on efforts to restore the spirit of science and technology to be connected with God, and not just dwelling on material as the *ma'na-yi ismi* approach. Thus, it is not a problem if a systematic and structured scientific knowledge is produced by the workings of contemporary modern methodologies as long as we can maintain the divine (God) spirit in them. It means the "*ma'na-yi harfi*" does not have to make us burn down modern material products as emphasized by West civilization, as Nursi himself did not do it.

Nursi's View on Media in the Risale-i Nur

This section will explain Nursi's thoughts on media and several things related to its use. Nursi, in this case, speaks in the context of media morality.

Supporting the Existence of Media Technology

Nursi told about old electronic-based media such as radio and television. He was a scholar and preacher who did not prohibit electronic media while staying oriented for good and positive things; even he saw the development of the media as a great blessing of God and part of the form of progress and civilization. On the other hand, he even encouraged Muslims to master it. It is apparent in the following long-term revelation:

"The strongest of all was this, that I said in one place that Almighty God's great bounties of the airplane, railway, and radio should be responded to with great thanks, yet humankind had not done this and had rained down bombs on men's heads with the planes. In contrast, thanks for the

³² Colin Turner, *The Qur'an Revealed: A Critical Analysis of Said Nursi's Epistles of Light* (Germany: Gerlach Press, 2013).

vast bounty of the radio would be shown by making it a universal million-tongued reciter of the Qur'an, which would allow people all over the earth to listen to the Qur'an. And in the explanation in the Twentieth Word of Qur'anic predictions about the wonders of civilization. I said concerning the allusions of one verse that the unbelievers would defeat the Islamic world by means of the railway. Although I urged Muslims to work towards these wonders, I am accused at the end of the indictment because of the previous public prosecutor's malice of "opposing modern advances like the railway, airplane, and radio."³³

In the above statement, Nursi shows that media such as airplanes, railway, and radio should be grateful as a gift from God. It means that by nature, Nursi sees that technological progress is inseparable from the intervention of God. It also implies that technological progress is part of God's signs or verses to be grateful. Apart from that, this is the most important axiologically, Nursi sees that the presence of information media technology must be oriented as a tool to spread the goodness and contents of the Quran. Here it is clear that Nursi did not reject the media's presence because it provided extraordinary benefits.

What Nursi shows is describing a *ma'ani harfi* attitude. Nursi did not see the advancement of technological media as something that naturally emerged by itself but was a manifestation of God Almighty's power.

Communication Tools and the Appearance of the Dajjal

Nursi in the fifth Rays stated:

"It says in a narration: "The day the Dajjal appears, all the world will hear. He will travel the world in forty days and has a wondrous ass." *God knows best*, on the condition that such conditions are completely sound, they miraculously predict that in the time of the Dajjal, the means of communication and travel will have so advanced that an event will be heard by all the world a day. It will be shouted out by the radio and heard in the east and west and read about in all the newspapers. One man will travel the whole world in forty days and see the seven continents and seventy countries. These narrations thus miraculously foretold the telegraph, telephone, radio, railway, and airplane ten centuries before they appeared."³⁴

³³ Said Nursi, *The Rays*, 2008 (Pdf File).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Nursi saw a relationship between the progress of communication tools and the Dajjal. In the narrative above, the time when the Dajjal appeared was a period of advancement of communication and transportation means. As it is known, the Dajjal is a symbol of *munkar* and *kufur* (badness) keeping people away from God. The presence of the Dajjal can turn away their (people) weak faith. The illustration that the emergence of the Dajjal is predicted as a period of the progress of communication and transportation shows that the danger of Dajjal is the same as the danger of communication tools. It happens to communication media that are not used properly on a moral basis. At this time, the advancement of the Internet has illustrated what Sa'id Nursi mentioned. What happens around the world will be known by the other half of the world in a day, an hour, even in the blink of an eye, by simply pressing the "enter" button. However, Nursi reminded that the emergence of the Dajjal, which is identical with the advancement of communication and transportation, is a prediction that the potential for immorality in the existence of media is a very likely thing. Media cause the emergence of various damages, evil, and destructive actions in people's lives. It means that media has a tremendous influence on society, and the amount of content that does not lead to the truth, fake news, and fraud makes the public restless and trapped in prolonged conflict. Also, social media allows hate speech to occur. According to Yunus, hate speech contains the provocation for violence, the provocation for hatred/hostility, and the provocation for discrimination,³⁵ all of which can happen in the world of the Internet.

What is phrased is in line with the following Nursi statement:

"...Then someone asked: "When he dies, Satan will proclaim loudly to the world from 'Dikili Ta_' in Istanbul that so-and-so has died." So I said: "The news will be broadcast by telegraph." However, I heard shortly afterward that the radio had been invented, and I realized that my answer had not been completely accurate. Eight years later, while in the Darü'l-Hikmet, I said: "Satan will broadcast it to the world by the radio..."³⁶

The statement is the core of Nursi's thoughts in the world of broadcasting and information communication. Nursi explained that Satan's news of death would be proclaimed throughout the world via telegraph and radio. It touches on several important things related to

³⁵ Anis, Anggreni, and Farhah, "Hate Speech in Arabic Language: Case Study in Instagram Comments."

³⁶ Said Nursi, *The Rays*, 2008 (Pdf).

the world of communication, namely, 1) the possibility of excessive action or exploitation through the media. How can the news of death be reported around the world? This is what is happening when news about deaths around the world due to war, for example, can easily be known by people in the other side of the world so that it ignites the anger and emotions of many people; 2) there is a “Satanic” tendency to dominate the media. This can be seen from the excessive capitalization of the media on an event without paying attention to the elements of morality; 3) there is a tendency to reduce events by the media to benefit from materialism.³⁷ These three things are inherent in the context of hoax media messages, which often reduce the meaning of events for certain interests.

For that, Nursi recommends moral values in media activities. The use of media for da’wah activities is what Nursi recommended. Therefore it is not surprising that the Nursi movement’s preaching orientated the media as a means of preaching. We could see the Nur movement around the globe using media as da’wa tools. For instance, the Indonesia Nursi movement is in cooperation with radio RAS FM 95.05 Jakarta, which is scheduled on every Wednesday at 09.00-10.00 am where the messages of Nursi are delivered and conveyed by Nur students.³⁸ Besides, Nursi’s movement also uses new media in da’wa activities. It could be seen from social media such as Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube named ‘*Friends of the Minutes of Nur*’ (*Risale-I Nur Friends*) for the Nursi proselytizing platforms. I am among the audience who always receive messages through WhatsApp and Telegram sent by Ustadh Hasbi Sen, an Indonesian Nursi’s preacher. The use of new media in Nursi’s da’wa activities is more dominated by poster posts, hash tags, articles, and Islamic videos which contains the message of Nursi’s preaching. The messages conveyed in Nur’s social media movement are nothing more than pearl words, spiritual advice. The movement avoided the issues of *khilâfiyah* (internal differences of thoughts) in Islam. Nursi’s life itself avoids conflict and disunity. His movement seeks to embrace all groups. Concerning this, Selim Akyuz and Enderhan Karakoc,³⁹ in their

³⁷ Hamid Mowlana, “Theoretical Perspectives on Islam and Communication,” *China Media Research* 3, no. 4 (2007).

³⁸ Hasbi Sen, “Personal Interview,” 2020; Jamaluddin Kulawu, “Personal Interview,” 2020; Irwandi, “Personal Interview,” 2020.

³⁹ Selim Akyuz and Enderhan Karakoc, “The Presentation of Theologian Identity on Television in Turkey,” *Journal of International Scientific Publications: Media And Mass*

study on the presentation of the identity of theology in television in Turkey, said that religion could integrate with television, often viewed as a secular product. It means that there is no obstacle to presenting religion through the media.

Reading Hoaxes Happened in Social Media through *Ma'na-yi Harfi* and *Ma'na-yi Ismi*

New media offer freedom in self-expression.⁴⁰ Cyberspace is a new space where people can do many things they do not do in real space. Hoax news is fake news that is constructed and delivered for certain materialistic interests. There are several characteristics of hoax information, including; the narrative is unnatural and turgid, not supported by valid data and facts, aired or published by non-mainstream media, and not reflect the truth of the facts.

Hoaxes News; It All Starts from "Ana"

In Nursi's study, "*ana*" is the key to uncovering reality, the meaning of reality, and the secret of the Owner's greatness, namely God. "*Ana*" human is a relationship between humans and God.⁴¹ Man who understands himself will understand his God. Whoever understands himself will also understand that what is outside himself is also a manifestation of God. Humans are creatures of God's perfect creation because humans have two tendencies, namely *fujûr* and *taqwa*. *Taqwa* encourages people to know their God, while *fujûr* leads man to disobedience, corruption, and away from God.

Modern communication science based on new media that embraces freedom provides an open space for each individual (self) to play with information. Through social media, everyone can write information, pass it on, and respond to information according to their wishes. This freedom of communication refers to "*Ana*." "*Ana*" communicators/senders of communication messages who are deprived of divine roots will encourage destructive actions that are contrary to God's law. "*Ana* communicator/sender" targets the psychology of "*Ana*" communicant/receiver, who generally tends to follow something inspiring the soul and generating adrenaline. It sticks to

Communication 2 (2013): 24–25.

⁴⁰ David Holmes, *Teori Komunikasi, Media, Teknologi, Dan Masyarakat*.

⁴¹ Said Nursi, *Risalah Ana Wa At-Thabi'ah* (Istanbul: Sozler Publications, 2008).

the overexploited information with a bombastic title. Often we come across a story whose title does not match the facts.

“*Ana*,” who is constantly connected to God, will encourage the birth of the following things, namely; *first* news that is built on awareness of the usefulness, *second* news is built to describe a fact as a form of recognition of social facts, which is God’s will, *third* news is built with individual interpretations based on facts guided by divine morality to avoid corrupt actions against facts, *fourth* news is built to seek and find the truth as a manifestation of *al-haqq*, not as a mere manifestation of individual desires.

These are relevant to the Mowlana’s theory,⁴² which stated that Islamic communication must be formed on *tawhîd*, *taqwa*, *amânah*, *amr ma’rûf nahyi munkar ummah*. His saying emphasizes the importance of connecting to God in the communication media activities. This is in line with the value of online Islamic media literacy which includes the principles of online news production, news distribution ethics, guarantee of accuracy and commitment to anti-hoax, the spirit of *amar ma’rûf nahi munkar*, the principle of wisdom in da’wah, the principle of digital interaction, and the principle of press freedom.⁴³ Through these concepts, he criticizes the Western concept of journalism that is not based on moral values causing many negative impacts.

Media Environment in *Ma’na-yi Harfi* and *Ma’na-yi Ismi*

“*Ana*” is the main entrance for the application of the *ma’na-yi harfi* approach. “*Ana*,” who is connected to God, will dig every fact as an effort to reveal the secret of God. Information about events is a fact that must be explored in communication science. Western communication is only oriented and stops at extracting facts and even the meaning of the facts themselves, but Islamic communication explores the meaning behind these facts pointing to God.⁴⁴ Therefore, several points are analyzed in the following.

⁴² Hamid Mowlana, “Theoretical Perspectives on Islam and Communication.”

⁴³ Rila Setyaningsih, “Model Penguatan E-Dakwah Di Era Disruptif Melalui Standar Literasi Media Islam Online,” *Tsaqafah: Jurnal Peradaban Islam* 15, no. 1 (2019): 67–82, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v15i1.2947>.

⁴⁴ Andi Faisal Bakti, “Islamic Communication Paradigm,” in *Intergrasi Komunikasi Islam Dan Dakwah Melalui Scope Jurnal* (Kota Semarang, 2020).

Objectivity and Individualization of Information

When everything departs from “*Ana*,” the possibility of individualization of information is inevitable. Individualization of information can be dangerous on the one hand, although good on the other. It is problematic and dangerous when information is seen as an object that must be exploited with self-will according to certain needs and interests. In Western communication, the objectivity of information is understood as something that refers to the object of events or incidents but is exploited with certain interests. At this point, the objectivity of the West’s information is the individualization of the information itself. It means that news narratives are indeed structured on visible facts, but the measuring frame is the individual self or the ideology inherent in the individual who owns the media. The problem is that Western communication does not recognize the presence of God and morality in any event that is seen and built into the news. To media, morality is relative; society determines the truth.⁴⁵ Even if there are ethics, then it is only human ethics made on the material world, not the supernatural world of divinity. Western media associations and trade unions determined the number of rules to ensure objectivity and avoid waste of public interest for the sake of the interests of media.

Ma'na-yi harfi through “*ana*” gives something different. In *ma'na-yi harfi*, an event or incident, or phenomenon which is the basis of information is understood as “self” (individual). Nevertheless, as it is known, in *ma'na-yi harfi*, self (*ana*) has a relationship with God, so that self is the key to unlocking God’s secret behind the phenomena or events that occur so that the built news is reflecting goodness by paying attention to moral values. This is a significant difference between Islamic communication based on *ma'na-yi harfi* and general communication based on materialism-secularism. On the other hand, because *ma'na-yi harfi* is included in the *tawhîdic* worldview, the news or information conveyed must also be balanced. The constructed information must prioritize unity and peace, not anxiety and conflict. Nursi himself saw that conflict was one of the biggest enemies of Muslims⁴⁶.

Hoax information is information that has the potential to divide human life. There are several cases when the news is disseminated to

⁴⁵ Osman Koroglu and Ozhan Tingoy, “Principles of Islamic Communication: A Comparison with Western Communication Approaches and Some Turkish Examples,” in *World Congress on Islamic Systems (World-ISLAM2011)* (Subang, 2011).

⁴⁶ Said Nursi, *The Rays*, 2008 (Pdf).

the public; the community's response varies. Even because they were carried away by emotions, one community group was involved in a conflict and even bloodshed. This stems from information that is not based on the morality of peace as the value of *tawhid*.

Information Capitalization and Commercialization

Media that prioritizes the *ma'na-yi ismi* attitude will only make information solely for material interests. That's because media practitioners only view information as merely an object that is free to be exploited, while on the other hand moral values require limitations, and this is a *ma'na-yi harfi* attitude. A serious problem in the world of media is the capitalization and commercialization of information. Information is made into objects constructed in such a way as to achieve great material benefits. Commercialization sometimes obscures media ideals. Because it is market-oriented, information is prepared and processed in such a way as to attract many people, even though there are many facts reduced in meaning. Media work can hardly be separated from this orientation—a media controlled by a capitalist conglomerate.

Suppose the old mainstream media such as television, radio, and newspapers benefit from the news framing they have created over the years to enrich individual media owners. In that case, the emergence of new media gives birth to many capitalistic individuals through their posts on social media, YouTube, etc. The most visible thing from social media today is the emergence of media buzzers who work for certain communities and even governments. They block up any issues that can support the interests of the employer. They get money and wages. Their job is to find issues, construct them, and spread them through social media channels. The effect arising from their actions is splitting the community into camps of conflict, dispute, and disrupting public peace or diverting people's attention from certain crucial issues.

Ma'na-yi harfi through "ana" against it all. In *ma'na-yi harfi*, material gain is not denied but only as an intermediary to get close to the material's Owner. Media activities with the *ma'na-yi harfi* approach try to see the material is not the main goal, but the discovery of God's secret is the main point. Social media activists through *ma'na-yi harfi* try to display trust, commitment to honesty, balance, kindness, useful messages, videos or images supporting

community improvement, and touch many aspects of social life by their contents so that in the end, they get a position in the heart audiences allowing them to get a profit, a good advantage over good efforts. It confirms as Koroglu and Tingoy⁴⁷ concluded that Islam has the ultimate solutions to the problems of media and communications fields and these fields need more attention from the Muslim social sciences community.

Media Owner Ideology and Hoax Content: Islamic Media vs Media Secularism

Ideology determines the direction of the media. Media, both mainstream and social media, cannot be separated from the ideology on which they are based. Collective ideologies generally influence mainstream media such as TV, Radio, and Newspapers during social media because they are individual-based, are generally influenced by personal ideologies. Nevertheless, both of them are influenced by ideology.

Hoaxes generally appear in media that does not pay attention to morality. In Nursi's study, there are two major ideologies: the Islamic ideology called the *tawhidic worldview* and the secular ideology, which is generally based on materialism, hedonism, pragmatism, and so on. Media owners who create content cannot be separated from the influence of the ideology they adhere to. Media that adheres to secularism tends to display things oriented towards self-fulfillment and worldliness, regardless of whether the information constructed and shared is useful or even brings damage to social life. The orientation of this type of media owner is material and satisfaction. Owners of this type of media depend only on the material. It is therefore not surprising if hoax-immoral news is commonplace for this group.

Unlike the media owners who are standing on Islamic ideology. This then gave rise to the term "Islamic media." Islamic media must be debatable among scientists⁴⁸ but it represents the Islamic worldview in media. Because it is not based on material, Islamic media allows

⁴⁷ Koroglu and Tingoy, "Principles of Islamic Communication: A Comparison with Western Communication Approaches and Some Turkish Examples."

⁴⁸ Gholam Khiabany, "De-Westernizing Media Theory or Reverse Orientalism: Islamic Communication as Theorized by Hamid Mowlana," *Media Culture Society* 25, no. 3 (2003): 415–21.

solidarity between media owners and media audiences to perform. In a study of the Islamic media *Rodja TV*, Adeni ⁴⁹ sees that Islamic media grows based on solidarity with the Muslim community to survive without becoming commercial media. Islamic media put its struggle orientation on the name of religion and the common good. This is the essence of *ma'ani harfi* that a solid divine base produces a solid sense of humanity and togetherness, while for *ma'na-yi ismi*, because it stands on matter alone, humanity and togetherness is not properly developed.

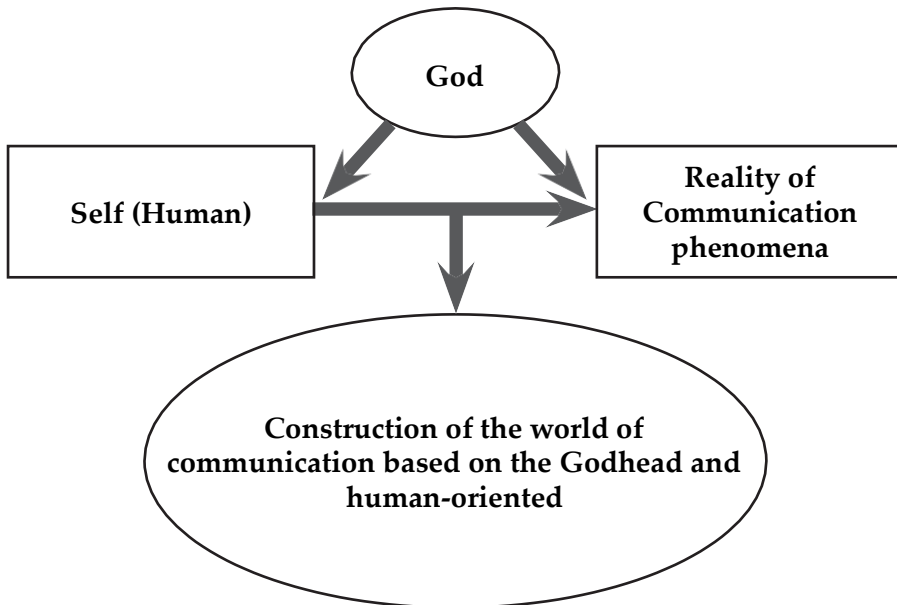


Chart 1: *Ma'na-yi harfi* Communication Model

The chart above shows that the interaction of human beings with reality or communication phenomena based on meditation on God's existence will produce a communication world-building based on the divine vision, which has an orientation to improve human life.

Conclusion

There are significant differences between media activities based on morality and media activities that stand on worldly material orientation. Hoax occurs because the media does not prioritize morality

⁴⁹ Adeni, *Institusi Televisi Keislaman: Rodja TV Sebagai Media Islam Salafi (Islamic Television: Rodja TV as Salafism Media)*. (Jakarta: Cinta Buku Media, 2016).

but leads to self-fulfillment and certain groups. *Ma'na-yi harfi* through the “*ana*” provides an offer of a communication model, which I later call *ma'na-yi harfi* communication model, that the communication phenomenon is interpreted, explored, constructed, and displayed with self-consideration (individual or collective self), but it is built in the full awareness that phenomena belong to the absolute Ruler, and humans as the giver of meaning to these phenomena must translate the greatness of God in them. The phenomenon of communication is considered a part of the greatness of God in the universe. This *ma'na-yi harfi* communication model is, of course, very useful in reconstructing the semiotic study model in the scientific tradition of Western communication. In the Western world, the study of semiotics is understood as an effort to understand symbols. In principle, each symbol has its meaning. Nevertheless, for the Western world, the meaning in question is the meaning of the symbol itself based on the social reality supporting it, but in the *ma'na-yi harfi* communication model, the visible symbols are interpreted as a manifestation of the greatness of God.[]

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