RESEARCH ARTICLE

ISSUES IN OBTAINING AUTHENTICISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE AVAILABLE ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE AGE OF 4TH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

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Abstract

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In recent years, social media plays important role as a platform for people to obtain information in general and Islamic knowledge in particular. We have entered the age of 4th Industrial revolution where social media has change the way people obtain and disseminate information. It becomes an essential for people in searching for information, communicating, interact with each other and business purposes. There are enormous information available on social media. However, it is important to highlight that not all of these information are genuine or authentic, trustworthy and accurate. Same thing goes with information on Islamic knowledge. In Islam, it is crucial for information to be based on original and reliable sources especially *al-Quran* and *Hadith*. Therefore, this article will assess and evaluate the issues in obtaining authentic Islamic knowledge available on social media. In brief, the methodology used is library research which will be presented in descriptive and narrative approach. Subsequently, it will propose various recommendations for enhancing the quality of information on Islamic knowledge available on social media.

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Introduction:-

We have entered the age of the 4th Industrial Revolution where social media has change the way people obtain general information and Islamic knowledge is not in an isolated. Social media becomes an essential for people in searching for information, communicating, interact with each other and business purposes. There are various social media applications which allow people to communicate in social forum like Facebook, twitter and other chat sites, where users generally socialise by sharing news, photos or ideas and thoughts, or respond to issues and other contents. In other words, social media facilitates social interaction and enable discussion by people across the world. Nowadays, social media plays important role as a platform for people to seek Islamic knowledge. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that not all information about Islamic knowledge available on social media is accurate, authentic and trustworthy.

In Islam, knowledge is '*Ilm*, it is referred to in many Quranic verses as 'light' (*nur*) and Allah is also described as the ultimate *nur*. It means that *'ilm* in the general sense is synonymous with the "light of Allah" as mention in the *al-Quran*, "God is the light of the heavens and the earth.." (*al-Quran,* 24:35). Knowledge in the Western world means information about something, divine or corporeal, while '*ilm* in Islam is an all-embracing term covering theory, action and education.

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The first and most crucial obligation as a Muslim is to acquire knowledge. There are many injunction referring to this in *al-Quran* and *Hadith*. The first revelation of Quranic verses to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) implies seeking knowledge. The first verse was *Iqra* meaning "read", opening the door to read, write, and ponder. Henceforth, *al-Quran* urges the mankind to think, ponder, reflect and acquire knowledge that would bring them closer to God and his creation. It also reported that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) says seeking knowledge is essential for every Muslim and urged them to seek knowledge as far they could reach and also to seek it all times. Consequently, there is a need for a Muslim to practice and preach this knowledge. In the *al-Quran* says "and when we have recited it to you, then follow its recitation" (*al-Quran*, 75:18). No man becomes truly a perfect Muslim without knowing the meaning of Islam.

As it has been mentioned, there are various al-Quranic verses emphasizing the importance of knowledge, there are hundreds of Prophetic traditions that encourage Muslims to acquire all types of knowledge from any corner of the world. Islamic knowledge is obligatory for every Muslims. There are some well-known *Hadith* related to *'ilm*. First *Hadith* is highly referred to in Islamic discourses, commands to "seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave" *(Multaqa Ahl al Hadeeth)*. Hence this rules out the span of time period for seeking and obtaining Islamic knowledge. Secondly, "seeking knowledge even if it is in as far as China" is equally referenced *Hadith*.The importance of Islamic knowledge can be inferred from these *Hadith*. Therefore, seeking information on social media is not a crime based on *Hadith* which says "a word of wisdom is a lost property of a Muslim, let him claim it wherever he finds it" *(At-Tirmidhi 2687).*

Research Objective:-
Thus, this article attempts to highlight the issues in obtaining authentic Islamic knowledge available on social media. This article is set to achieve the following objectives:
1.   To assess the issues in obtaining authentic Islamic knowledge available on social media
2.   To identify the main actors in ensuring authenticity of Islamic knowledge

Methodology:-
This article used a descriptive method that explains issues in obtaining authentic Islamic knowledge available on social media. Furthermore, descriptive method can be characterized as an attempt to determine, describe and identify. Descriptive is aimed to shed lights on current issues or problems through process of data collection that enables them to describe the situation in a complete manner. In brief, the methodology used in this article is library research which will be presented in descriptive and narrative approach.

Issues:
Social media has become a major source of reference for people to obtain information about Islam. The convenience of social media in providing access to a lot of information about Islam is no longer deniable even among the students and academicians alike. A pool of information are provided by typing the word "Islam" on the search engine of Apple Apps Store or Play-store (Android). There are various number of social media applications which allow people to obtain Islamic knowledge directly from its source such as Quran stories, Ratib Al-Attas and iQuran.

After the 21st century, with the development of information communication technology (ICT), flow of information including Islamic knowledge is limitless through social media. Social media enables people to share all sorts of information on Islam and communicating with each other in an online community. There is no limitation in the publication of information on social media in terms of who creates the information or how the information is displayed. Therefore, it depends on the people to evaluate the authenticity, quality and reliability of information that they obtained from social media specifically about Islamic knowledge. Undeniably, the level of accuracy, reliability and quality of information is not guaranteed on social media specifically about Islam.

Traditional media such as radio, books and network television is primarily designed to be a broadcast platform (one-to-many), whereas social media is designed to be a dialogue (many-to-many) interaction. This many-to-many interaction allows large groups of geographically dispersed users to produce a pool of valuable information resources which can be obtained easily by social media users. While another studies represent how social media become a platform in conveying Islamic knowledge and a popular medium of communication among the Muslim worldwide. Despite the fact that social media becomes an essential platform in our lifestyle, this article will assess

the issues in obtaining Islamic knowledge on social media through some sub-topics such as relevancy, accuracy, trustworthy of information sources we use and language barrier.

Relevancy:
Although the social media has come with its own vices which are un-Islamic, it is still relevant and useful to Muslims. Thus, the problem with information on Islamic knowledge available on social media is absence of relevancy. Islamic knowledge that available on social media can thus be relevant to the extent that it promotes the values derived from the religious precepts of Islam. In other words, in obtaining Islamic knowledge from social media, the information has to be relevant to the Muslim society itself because different country or group of people followed certain Islamic sects; *Shafi'i, Hanbali, Hanafi* and *Maliki*. There are also differences about understanding the arguments of *al-Quran* and *Hadith* such as in ablution, purification, prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage. The followers of these Islamic sects spread across the world and practise Islam depending on which sect they are following.

Accuracy:
In the past, the spread of religious knowledge throughout the Muslims world was limited due to lack of communication tools. Rather classical Islamic teaching was communicated through medium of books. Furthermore, Islamic teaching is regulated by instructive institutions such as mosque and *Madrasa*, and knowledge from *Imams* and *Sheikhs* but with the evolution of social media applications, this drastically changes the pattern of Islamic teaching. Islamic knowledge obtained from books are in detailed and references for each information are stated in the bibliography section. Similar to Islamic knowledge disseminated in mosque and *Madrasa* which taught by religious scholars such as *Imam*, preachers and *Mufti* who have profound knowledge about Islam. There are no doubt with the level of accuracy for each information about Islamic knowledge disseminated through social media due to indefinite publication of information and limited controls over who creates the information or how the information is displayed.

Trustworthy:
Nowadays, Muslim religious preachers began to teach *al-Quran* and *Hadith* either by uploading their preaching video on the YouTube or short verses of *al-Quran* or *Hadith* through Twitter and Facebook. Some Islamic scholars like Tareq Al Suwaidan and Amr Khaled have over 600,000 supporters on Twitter and reach about one million Facebook followers. Hence, people can easily obtained Islamic knowledge through their posts and utilize it for their own benefits. This infers that the contemporary Islamic teaching takes place significantly with the revolution of social media which offer virtual learning opportunities in Muslim world. Despite the fact that such information on Islam disseminated by eminent Muslim scholars, to what extent does this Islamic knowledge disseminated through social media can be trusted? Who justify the information provided?

Language barrier:
Language can also serve as a barrier in accessing and utilizing social media. Arabic is the language of *al-Quran* but not everybody can understandwithout any translation provided. People can obtained information about Islam if the content that available is the language that they understand well. Due to this language barrier, concepts and terms that people obtained from social media can become inaccurate information about Islam. There is a possibility the people use such information and practise it. This limitation will led to poor understanding about Islamic knowledge and the true meaning of Islam as a whole.

The Main Stakeholders and Social Media:
There are several stakeholders who play an important role in ensuring authenticity of Islamic knowledge available on social media. These are the government, Muslim scholars and the society itself.

Government:
Currently, many governments are using social media as their platform in providing information about progress, news and development. For instance, Negara Brunei Darussalam's government has opened an Instagram account known as @gov.bn where latest official information, announcements and news on the Government of Brunei Darussalam can be found.While Islamic *Da'wah* Centre under Ministry of Religious Affairs, Negara Brunei Darussalam use Facebook as one of their platform where the society can reach them directly and obtain information on Islam from their Facebook's page.

Social media technologies raise a large number of information management issues, primarily in the areas of privacy, security, accuracy, and spanning major issues such as personally identifiable information, security of government data and information, and the accuracy of publicly available data. Therefore, for the government to successfully reduce inaccurate, unreliable and non-authentic information on Islamic knowledge available on social media, they need to tackle these information management issues by adopting policies and framework which compatible and adequate with those social media providers. By endorsing such policy and framework, without any doubt, authentic information on Islamic knowledge can be found on social media and Muslim society can easily benefit from this as well.

Certainly, it is crucial for this generation to be aware on the existence of such negative influence on social media that can elicit their faith as a Muslim. Hence, the government needs to endeavour great effort in putting a framework or policy in managing authenticity of information to elude such negative stigma about information on Islamic knowledge available on social media.

Increase Involvement of Muslim Scholars, Religious Leaders and Religious Authorities:
Social media has become the double edged sword for us. It has the potential of being very beneficial but at the same time it can be very harmful. As Muslims, we should all have our portions of real human interaction with people of knowledge and take from their perspectives and insights rather than solely obtaining Islamic knowledge from social media without taking any initiative to refer those information to these Muslim scholars or religious authority. Indeed, there are numerous blessings found in those religious gatherings that cannot be found elsewhere, even in books.

There have been a lot of involvements among Muslim scholars, religious leaders and authorities such as *Mufti*, *Imam*, *Da'ie* and religious preachers. Nowadays, there is almost a race to digitize Islamic knowledge among leading centres around the world. As example, Al-Azhar University in Cairo has established its own home page devoted to address various Islamic issues where most information available are provided by Muslim scholars. Indirectly, this site serves as one of important source of Islamic knowledge where the Muslims can easily obtain authentic and trustworthy information about Islam on social media.

Digital literacy society:
In the past, Islamic knowledge can be found in audio tapes, books, and booklets which are available in libraries, Islamic schools, and mosques. But there is a limitation to access these resources except for the people who are domiciling in the vicinity. Nowadays, with the availability of social media and Islamic information on it, Muslims began to realize the importance of social media as a platform in disseminating and obtaining information about Islam which further help to portray the existence of Islam around the world.

At present, social media became the new means of informing, interacting and engaging among the society. The fast implementation of social media reflected in the trend of learning opportunities across the world especially among the Muslim. Ultimately, social media has become a source of opportunities for the growth and enhancement in term of education for Muslim who obtain Islamic knowledge available on social media for their own benefit.

It is therefore crucial to turn a society into a digital society where everyone knows the importance in obtaining accurate, relevant and trustworthy information about Islamic knowledge available on social media. It is important to educate the society about social media's content, rules and regulation in order for them to be able to distinguish between genuine Islamic sites and those that have sinister motives in using social media.

Recommendation:-
The governments need to re-evaluate their existing information communication technology (ICT) systems in order to have a successful enhancement in tackling information management issues. Ultimately, the key to this transformation's achievement relies on the growth of synergies among the main stakeholders; the government, Muslim scholars and the society.

In line with the above recommendations, the government can develop a short-term and long-term strategies in tackling information management issues. As this article demonstrates, social media applications which available today keep on changing and evolve with regard to information authenticity in particular. Though there are issues in obtaining authentic information on Islamic knowledge, the main stakeholders discussed in this article demonstrate

that it is possible to overcome these issues of relevancy, accuracy, language barrier and trustworthy of information through a synergies among the main stakeholders and social media application's provider.

Conclusion:-

Despite the fact that there are challenges in obtaining authentic Islamic knowledge available on social media, the Muslims should take this as an opportunity to make the best use of it for the cause of Islam and Muslims as a whole. There is a need for enhancement on the quality of Islamic knowledge available on social media where all stakeholders need to synchronize their efforts because of its greater prospects in spreading and globalising Islam and its value. With the availability of social media, Islamic knowledge can reach the world in a cheap, faster and convenient way.

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