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## Factors that Determine Awareness Towards *Shari'ah*-Compliant Social Media

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### KEYWORDS

Factors, Awareness, *Shari'ah*-compliant Social Media, Brunei Darussalam.

### ABSTRACT

**Purpose of the study:** As social media becomes an important part of our lives, awareness of *Shari'ah*-compliant social media is still up to debate, particularly on the factors that contributed to it. This paper aims to test the factors that determine the awareness of *Shari'ah*-compliant social media with gender, age, employment, religion and educational background. **Methodology:** To achieve this objective, a quantitative approach was employed. Using a questionnaire as an instrument, 165 responses were gathered by simple random sampling technique. **Main Findings:** The findings indicated a significant level of awareness regarding *Shari'ah*-compliant social media among Social Media users in Brunei, where religion and educational background were found to be the leading factors contributing to it. **Application of this study:** As the study focused on the interdisciplinary of social media usage and *Shari'ah* principle, its findings are relevant to policymakers, educators and related agencies. **Novelty/Originality of this study:** This study distinctively highlights religion and educational background as the primary factors influencing awareness of *Shari'ah*-compliant social media. This strengthens existing knowledge on the vital role of religion and education in one's life in shaping better usage of social media, as well as future studies, particularly in the interdisciplinary fields of technology and Islamic studies.

### INTRODUCTION

Since a few decades ago, social media has increasingly ingrained in our daily lives. Various studies have been made on this field in relation to the Islamic perspective and the like. Nevertheless, this paper aims to further

contribute to the body of knowledge particularly on the Islamic aspect of social media, which, in the context of this paper, will be referred to as "*Shari'ah*-compliant social media". The concept of *Shari'ah*-compliant social media was not previously well-known or used, little to no research had been explored

on this field. However, multiple types of research have been done with the essence of the “*Shari’ah-compliant social media*”. Ibahrine (2018), refers to *Shari’ah-compliant social media* as “Social media that is *Shari’ah-compliant*”. The term “*Shari’ah-compliant*” refers to “an act of activity that complies with the requirements of the *Shari’ah* or Islamic law.” In the Islamic banking sector, this term is commonly used synonymously with the term “Islamic” such as “*Shari’ah-compliant finance*” or “*Shari’ah-compliant investment*,” (Shah, et al., 2019).

Through an interview session with one of the officers from the *Shari’ah* legal unit in Brunei conducted during the span of this research (circa 2021), a *Shari’ah-compliant social media* was described as “Social media is an application where the use comes from the user themselves. So, what is meant by *Shari’ah-compliant* is the content is not contrary to *Hukum Syarak (Shari’ah Law)*. This means it is in line with the *Hukum Syarak* and based on Islamic teaching. So, it depends on the user, on what kind of content it is,” (Asli, N. A., 2021). Therefore, it can be concluded that social media that complies with Islamic law in terms of acts, activities and contents is known as *Shari’ah-compliant social media*. Simply put, social media is devoid of actions, events, and information that contradicts Islamic teachings.

Since the introduction of social media, despite its many good attributes, there have been a lot of emerging issues and problems that were found to trespass the boundaries of Islamic teaching. For instance, issues such as scams, cyberbullying, online predators, romance scams, revenge of intimate material, impersonation, the spread of obscene material, normalisation of *maksiat* (sins), demonisation of Islam, misrepresentation of Islam, unhealthy trend, terrorism, fake information, *fitnah*, *ghibah* and the likes were found to have taken a root in the Brunei’s social media scenes (Nabilah Haris, 2013; Annie Abdullah & Calvin Chan, 2021; Asli, N. A, 2021 & 2024). This revelation does not come as a surprise as Brunei Darussalam, despite its relatively small population (with less than 500 thousand in total), had been ranked the fourth

highest social media usage in the whole world (Kemp, 2023).

During the preliminary research done in Brunei, it was found that these issues emerged because most people were not aware that what they had conducted on social media was not in line with Islamic teaching, which indicated a lack of awareness of what is considered *shari’ah-compliant* and what is not considered as *shari’ah-compliant*.

Therefore, this research aims to identify the factors that determine the awareness of *Shari’ah-compliant social media* among social media users in Brunei, particularly in regards to these five variables; gender, age and employment status, religion and educational background. As these five factors make up the demographic overview of every region’s identity, they provide insights and help uncover patterns in analysing the awareness of certain topics and fields.

This is significant in integrating technology with Islamic values, particularly to promote and encourage *Shariah-compliant* use of social media and avoid non-*shariah-compliant* use of social media.

## METHOD

To comply with the objective of the research, the awareness of the public on *Shari’ah-compliant social media* was collected first. To collect this, the survey method was used as instrumentation. A simple random sampling technique was employed. A total of 165 respondents participated, which according to Roscoe (1975) in Sekaran (2003) is an appropriate size for most behavioural research, which is between 30 to 500 samples.

Following today’s advancement, an online survey using Google Forms was used. The survey contained 5 questions, centred around the public’s awareness of *Shari’ah-compliant social media*. Respondents responded to the item’s statements on a 5-point Likert Scale (Likert, R., 1932). One represents “Strongly Disagree”, two “Disagree”, three “Neutral”, four “Agree” and five “Strongly Agree”. The following are the statements:

**Table 1: Survey's Questions**

| No | Question's Statement   |
|----|--|
| 1  | Follow and view <i>shari'ah</i> -compliant content on social media                             |
| 2  | Apply Islamic rulings when using social media.   |
| 3  | Have an idea of what <i>shari'ah</i> -compliant social media is                                |
| 4  | Aware of the <i>hukm</i> of posting non- <i>shari'ah</i> content on social media               |
| 5  | Understand the <i>hukm</i> of posting non- <i>shari'ah</i> -compliant content on social media. |

The findings on this were then used to test the five variables to determine the factors that contributed to the awareness.

## FINDING

### a. Public's awareness of *Shari'ah*-compliant social media

A total of 165 respondents among Brunei social media users were gathered and the result is as follows:

**Table 2: Mean calculated from each question**

| No | Question's Statement  | Mean | SD    |
|----|---|------|-------|
| 1  | Follow and view <i>Shari'ah</i> -compliant content on social media                            | 3.80 | 0.905 |
| 2  | Apply Islamic rulings when using social media   | 3.67 | 1.07  |
| 3  | Have an idea of what <i>Shari'ah</i> -compliant social media is                               | 3.36 | 1.33  |
| 4  | Aware of the <i>hukm</i> of posting non- <i>shari'ah</i> content on social media              | 4.20 | 1.03  |
| 5  | Understand the <i>hukm</i> of posting non- <i>shari'ah</i> -compliant content on social media | 4.13 | 1.06  |

The mean was selected because, according to Manikanda (2011), it is the most widely used statistical measure of central tendency, which establishes a single number to represent all of the data. Since the mean employs all of the data's values, it is a good representative of the data and can also accurately depict the data as a whole.

The public's awareness of social media that complies with *Shari'ah* law (*Shari'ah*-compliant social media) was measured by

calculating the overall mean of the questions, it resulted at 3.64. The response options on the questionnaire were on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree." With reference to Table 3, the mean (3.64) is considered to be at a high level because it is below the 3.41 – 4.20 mean value. This demonstrated the public's high level of awareness regarding social media that complies with *Shari'ah*.

**Table 3: Mean value according to the 5-point Likert Scale**

| Mean Value  | Interpretation |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1.00 – 1.80 | Very low       |
| 1.81 – 2.60 | Low            |
| 2.61 – 3.40 | Moderate       |
| 3.41 – 4.20 | High           |
| 4.21 – 5.00 | Very high      |

Source: Tschannen-Moran, M. & Gareis, C. R. (2004)

### b. Factors that determine awareness of *Shari'ah*-compliant social media

Five variables were used to test the factors that might contribute to awareness of *Shari'ah*-compliant social media among Bruneians. They are gender, age, employment, religion and educational background. According to the findings on gender, 86.1% of participants (142 respondents) are female and 13.9% are male (23 respondents). These two variables did not significantly correlate when tested with the awareness. However, a significant correlation was observed between awareness and educational background ( $p = .036$ ). Additionally, a significant relationship was found between awareness and religion ( $p < .001$ ) (Table 4).

**Table 4: Significant association of the variables**

| Variables              | Significant association |                 |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
|                        | Value                   | Interpretation  |
| Gender                 | $p = .084$              | Non-significant |
| Age                    | $p = .572$              | Non-significant |
| Employment             | $p = .090$              | Non-significant |
| Religion               | $p = .000$              | Significant     |
| Educational Background | $p = .036$              | Significant     |

**Table 5: Effect size of the variables**

| Variables              | Effect Size |                |
|------------------------|-------------|----------------|
|                        | Value       | Interpretation |
| Gender                 | .134        | Small          |
| Age                    | .044        | None           |
| Employment             | .132        | Small          |
| Religion               | .367        | Moderate       |
| Educational Background | .164        | Small          |

Nonetheless, according to Cohen (1992), these two variables' effects are small to moderate in size. The educational background Phi Coefficient (.164) indicates that there isn't much of a correlation between these factors. Nonetheless, the Phi Coefficient of Religion in Table 6, which is .367, suggests that there exists only a moderate correlation between these variables.

**Table 6: Cohen's Interpretation of Effect Size**

| Coefficient, <i>r</i> | Strength of association |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| .1 to .3              | Small                   |
| .3 to .5              | Moderate                |
| .5 to 1.0             | Large                   |

Source: Cohen (1992)

On the other hand, when referring to Akoglu's (2018) measure of association, these two variables reveal a strong to very strong association. The Phi Coefficient of educational background (.164), in contrast to Cohen's theory, indicates a strong correlation between these variables, according to Akoglu. However, Table 7 indicates that there is a strong correlation between these two variables based on the Phi Coefficient of religion (.367).

**Table 7: Akoglu's Measure of Association**

| Phi and Cramer's V | Interpretation  |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| > 0.25             | Very strong     |
| > 0.15             | Strong          |
| > 0.10             | Moderate        |
| > 0.05             | Weak            |
| > 0                | No or very weak |

Source: Akoglu (2018)

## DISCUSSION

It is reasonable to expect that religion would be linked to the awareness of *Shari'ah*-compliant social media. This is expected, since compared to non-Muslims, Muslims are expected to be more knowledgeable on matters pertaining to *Shari'ah*. This does not, however, imply that non-Muslims are unaware of social media platforms that adhere to *Shari'ah*. It only serves to support the theory that Muslims are more likely to be knowledgeable about and aware of *Shari'ah*-compliant social media as these topics are pertinent to and of interest to them. This is crucial to dictate the *shariah-compliant* use of social media, as the purpose of life is to worship Allah, as mentioned in Surah adh-dhariyat verse 56:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

Meaning: "I did not create jinn and humans except to worship me."

Not knowing the *hukm* can lead to not knowing whether what one is doing is right or wrong. If one's transgressed while not knowing it can be pardoned but if one transgressed while knowing, it is no longer the same case as not knowing. This is one of the importance of being aware of the *hukm*. Another is, to avoid doing prohibited things. When one knows the *hukm*, one has a better chance of avoiding such transgression.

Therefore, it is somewhat non-surprising that awareness of *Shari'ah*-compliant social media is associated with an educational background. The development of technology has made it possible to disseminate information to people of all backgrounds, ages, and even preferences. Thus, it was entirely possible that the educational background would influence the public's awareness of social media platforms that adhere to *Shari'ah* as exposure increases with education level (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2015). Compared to people with lesser levels of education, they would be exposed to a wider variety of knowledge and information. This may be related to the various educational levels since complexity increases with education level. Those with more education on the topic should understand it better than

those with no knowledge at all. As a result, a more comprehensive analysis could lead to the conclusion that educational exposure is essential for disseminating awareness and understanding of social media platforms that comply with *Shari'ah* principles.

Other than that, the result also showed that understanding the *hukm* plays an important role in the *shariah*-compliant use of social media.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the examination of the quantitative data gathered from the research questionnaire revealed that Bruneians have a good awareness of social media platforms that adhere to *Shari'ah*. This may be explained by the fact that Brunei is a nation that promotes Islam and that the majority of its events and activities must adhere to Islamic teachings. Thus, it is not shocking to learn that the general public is aware of this issue.

The only two variables on which a significant relationship was found between the five variables and awareness of *Shari'ah*-compliant social media were educational background and religion. The remaining three—employment, age, and gender—were not statistically significant. This could be because Muslims are more likely to be interested in topics that interest them, and people with higher levels of education are more likely to be exposed to topics that are not common knowledge, which could account for the relationship between education and interest.

Additionally, in an attempt to maximise awareness dissemination, some respondents to the questionnaire suggested that it would be best to incorporate a section on social media that is not compliant with *Shari'ah* such as misuses and potential dangers into the curriculum of the school. This is due to the fact that younger people use social media at a higher rate than adults do, making them more susceptible to threats.

This study distinctively strengthens existing knowledge on the vital role of religion and education in one's life particularly in

promoting and encouraging *shariah*-compliant use of social media, as well as hindering non-*shariah*-compliant use of social media. The research's findings are significant to policymakers, educators and related agencies in shaping better usage of social media. Most importantly, it is significant in guiding one's life as everything one does in this world shall be questioned in the hereafter, as mentioned in the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), reported by Ibn Mas'ud:

عَنْ ابْنِ مَسْعُودٍ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَا تَزُولُ قَدَمُ ابْنِ آدَمَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّهِ حَتَّى يُسْأَلَ عَنْ خَمْسٍ عَنْ عُمْرِهِ فِيْمَ أَفْنَاهُ وَعَنْ شَبَابِهِ فِيْمَ أَبْلَاهُ وَمَالِهِ مِنْ أَيْنَ اكْتَسَبَهُ وَفِيْمَ أَنْفَقَهُ وَمَاذَا عَمِلَ فِيْمَا عَلِمَ

Meaning: "The son of Adam will not be dismissed from his Lord on the Day of Resurrection until he is questioned about five issues: his life and how he lived it, his youth and how he used it, his wealth and how he earned it and he spent it, and how he acted on his knowledge."

Future research may consider expanding or focusing on the opinion of the professionals, experts, or people who specialise in this field of study in addition to gathering the data from the general public.

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