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Nuur Husna Khalid, Fadzila Azni Ahmad

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Islamic–Based Art of Communication Framework

Nuur Husna Khalid

Centre for Islamic Development Management Studies (ISDEV) Universiti Sains Malaysia,
Penang, Malaysia

Fadzila Azni Ahmad

Centre for Islamic Development Management Studies (ISDEV) Universiti Sains Malaysia,
Penang, Malaysia

Abstract

In governing an institution, organization or even the everyday life of an individual, a good art of communication is crucial. Hence, the aim of this working paper was to adduce an Islamic–based art of communication framework that would benefit members of an institution, specifically Islamic-based development institutions. In order to achieve this aim, this working paper had examined relevant secondary texts and analysed it using the content analysis method. This study found that the Islamic–based art of communication framework should be analysed based on the al-Qur’an and Hadith as well as contain at least three main elements, namely the morality (mannerliness) of the communicator, contents of the communication and communication etiquette.

Keywords: Art of Communication, Islamic-Based, Framework, Governance, Al-Qur’an

Introduction

Islamic–based art of communication is the assimilation of Islamic elements into communication. Looking back at the realities of today, the majority of communication problems, either from the individual, societal or national perspective, indicate that the contemporary state of communication is not fully capable of forming a harmonious society and nation. Hence, Islamic–based art of communication should be studied in–depth and a framework developed for this type of communication. When developing an Islamic–based art of communication framework, examining the results of contemporary studies is of great significance when identifying the gap and assisting in the formation of a framework, which could be the fundamentals of this study. A framework is an important element because it helps to determine the direction and aim of a study.

When defining the keywords in Islamic–based art of communication, one must first understand the definition of communication as well as communication in the context of Islamic history. Communication could easily mean a method to deliver information. In reference to the meaning of this statement, communication is not limited to various forms of speech because in reality, even silence is construed as a symbolic delivery of information or communication (Hassan & Mohd, 2001). Oakland (2004) stated that humans could actually

communicate through their sensory faculties and interestingly, each sensory faculty contributes differently to the information reception process; for example, sight could contribute 75% to the reception of information, while hearing, sensation, smell and taste could contribute 13%, 6%, 3% and 3% respectively. This shows that discussions by Oakland (2004) as well as Hassan and Mohd (2001) based on the understanding of communication are similar. Oakland (2004) also concluded that in order to enhance the effectiveness of a communication process, the combination of several forms of sensory faculties for delivering and receiving information is a very good and effective method and this is why the art in communication is important.

Basically, the communication process has been established for a long time now. Even in the Muslim world, religious preaching, which is the pillar of disseminating Islamic teachings, is a communicative form (Galander, 2002) and communication among humans had actually existed during the time of Prophet Adam a.s (Ariffin, 2007:125). Islamic preaching involves various forms of communication; thus, divine deliverance (wahyu) as well as the preaching process of the Prophets, the Messenger and HIS Companions could be understood as a communication process aimed at disseminating the understanding of Islam as well as its syariat. The al-Qur'an, with some of its contents telling the history of the divine deliverance (wahyu) as well as the Islamic preaching process, is easily accessible by examining the dialogue in it, which reflects this communication process. Among them, iterations such as "say", "he said", "he is saying", "it can be said". "they said" etc., is repeated in the al-Qur'an 1700 times (Tantawi, 2015). Examples of morality as well as the personality portrayed by the Prophets and the Messenger in the stories found in the al-Qur'an also portray the role of communication in the dissemination of Islamic preaching to fellow humans. Hence, it is evident that communication is the main tool used in the dissemination of syariat Islam.

For a start, communication is an important tool and medium, not only for Islam but also for humans, generally. Therefore, communication should be managed well according to the standards set by syariat Islam. One form of managing good communication is to build a framework for the art of communication. Thus, this working paper had suggested a framework for an Islamic-based art of communication. The general discussions had focused on the definition of the art of communication, the priority given to the art of communication in Islamic history and an analysis of discussions concerning the formulation of the Islamic-based art of communication framework as well as the overall conclusions. It is hoped that the Islamic-based art of communication framework adduced by this working paper would benefit members of an institution, specifically and humankind, in general.

The Art of Communication Based on The Conventional Paradigm

The art of communication has been discussed by researchers using various definitions and points of understanding. In this working paper, the points of understanding by researchers who had not stated or acknowledged the source of Islamic epistemological knowledge as a basis were collectively referred to as researchers attached to a conventional paradigm. The Islamic-based art of communication and the conventional paradigm-based communication are clearly different, especially in the source of its formulation. According to Salleh (2009: 20-21), the Islamic and conventional epistemology of knowledge are different because the conventional epistemology of knowledge is based on Western thinking, whereas Islamic epistemology of knowledge is based on four main sources, namely the al-Qur'an, Hadith,

Ijma' and the Qiyas by the ulama'. Therefore, the conventional epistemology of knowledge is a form of understanding the art of communication according to Western thinking and does not favour Islamic epistemology of knowledge in its discussions.

When examined carefully, although most researchers agree that communication covers a wide scope of discussions and is not only verbally oriented; hence, these researchers had produced works related to the art of communication in discussions pertaining to only verbal communication. Yusof (2002) explained that the art of communication is a form of effective communication. This was later agreed by Mustaffa (2007), who said that successful communication depends on how successful the communicator of the communication is in influencing the present behaviour of the receiver of the communication or the audience. According to Mustaffa (2007); Yusof (2002), the art of communication is a form of effective communication. Meanwhile, the effectiveness or success of the art of communication was measured by Mustaffa (2007) by studying behavioural changes. This goes on to show that the communication process is closely related to the delivery and reception aspects of a message, which ensures the effectiveness of a communication process.

Dolese (2015) defined the art of communication as a form of communication that could lend meaning and lead to a successful communication process. According to Dolese (2015), among the fundamentals of the art of communication are the principles outlined by Gricean in 1975, which consisted of four basic principles in the art of communication or better known as the *Gricean Maxim*, such as *relevance*, *manner*, *quality*, and *quantity*. In a similar vein Kushartanti, Yuwono and Lauder (2007), who had also outlined the *Gricean Maxim* in their work "*The Persona of Language*", had explained the principle adduced by Gricean as follows. First, the principle of relevance refers to the communication of something that is relevant to the discussion without any addition. Second, the principle of the manner refers to the manner in which something is communicated, whereby it should be brief, concise and accurate, while the principle of quality emphasises on the actual communication process and lastly, the principle of quantity, which emphasises on a communication that contributes as much information as possible in accordance to the required quantity (Kushartanti, Yuwono & Lauder, 2007).

Hence, it could be concluded that the art of communication based on the conventional paradigm is an effort to ensure the effectiveness and success of a communication process and focuses on the verbal aspect of communicative discussions that only involve tangible aspects. Discussions on the art of communication according to the conventional paradigm is seen as only focusing on a horizontal relationship, which is communication between the communicator and the audience without considering the vertical relationship. More than that, the understanding of the conventional art of communication is based on the rational of Western communication scholars, who had used their observation and knowledge to build the fundamentals and principles, which then became the basis for the conventional art of communication.

The Islamic-Based Art of Communication Concept

As mentioned earlier, Islamic-based art of communication is an art of communication that is discussed according to the fundamentals of Islamic knowledge and based on Islamic epistemology whose source must surely be an authentic Islamic source. Abdullah (2009)

stated that Muslim researchers, the al-Qur'an, Hadith, Ijma' and Qiyas should be the main references in a research and the primary sources are sources recognised by Allah SWT. Hence, discussions on Islamic-based art of communication should lend priority to sources of Islamic knowledge. This section of the working paper features discussions on Islamic-based art of communication that outlines at least three concepts relevant to this type of communication.

The first Islamic-based art of communication concept refers to a type of communication that comes in a form of wisdom (*hikmah*). Zabidi (2013) had defined the art of communication as a form of wisdom (*hikmah*). Wisdom has a wide meaning, and it is even discussed in the al-Qur'an, as indicated in surah al-Baqarah verse 269 meaning:

“He gives wisdom¹ to whom He wills, and whoever has been given wisdom has certainly been given much good. And none will remember except those of understanding” (al-Baqarah, 2:269)

According to verse 269 in Surah al-Baqarah above, it is clear that wisdom (*hikmah*) is a form of endowment and absolute right of Allah SWT. In the context of communication, the form of communication that is capable of winning over the party that is being communicated with or leaves behind an “*after effect*”, is defined as a wise form of communication (Zahiruddin, 2013). This also shows that the Islamic-based art of communication not only evolves around the discussion in the context of creatures (*makhluk*) but rather, is much more than that.

Besides that, Islamic-based art of communication also emphasises the big questions of “What”, “Who” and “How” in a communication process (Siau & Achini, 2017). The “what” question specifically touches on the contents of a message in the communication process. It is important to emphasise on the contents of the message because it represents the form of a communication, similar to that emphasised by Siau and Achini (2017:12). Whereas the question “how” the contents of the message are delivered determines the effectiveness of the delivery. Thus, the fundamentals of the art of communication is related to the three main questions. When a communication that is wished to be delivered is examined using the three main questions, then the success of the communication process is better guaranteed. Questions such as what the style of delivery is, what is the medium of delivery and what is the method of delivery should be dealt with before an artful communication is produced.

Besides that, in efforts to understand Islamic-based art of communication, the concept and method needs to be in line (Siau & Achini, 2017). For example, the *sakinah*² family concept exists in Islam; thus, the sharia method adduced by Islam assimilates the implementation of syariat such as facilitating the matrimonial process, emphasising the prohibition of *zina* (illicit sex), obstructing and prohibiting pornography etc. in efforts to achieve the objectives of the *sakinah* concept (Siau & Achini, 2017:74). According to this analogy, the second concept

¹ Wisdom (*hikmah*) is the ability to understand the secrets of syariat Allah SWT

² The word *sakinah* (Arabic) means a peaceful and calm mind. These word was mentioned six times in the al-Qur'an, namely (al-Baqarah, 2: 248), (al-Taubah, 9:26& 40), (al-Fath, 48: 4, 18 & 26).

in the Islamic-based art of communication championed by Siau and Achini (2017) had stated that elements such as “what”, “who” and “how” should be in line with Islamic sharia.

Thus, from another perspective, the Islamic-based art of communication was also discussed in the morality framework when delivering something as well as etiquette in communication. The concepts of etiquette and Islamic-based morality in Islamic-based art of communication is among the main concepts in Islamic-based art of communication and represents the third concept in the discussions. According to Abidin (2007:228-231), among the etiquettes and communication morality elements outlined are as follows.

1. Always talk about the truth. This statement is in accordance with the exhortation of Allah SWT, meaning, “O you who have believed, fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice” (al-Ahzab,33:70).
2. Abstain from saying what is haram and ensure the communication is carried out in a noble and respected atmosphere, as mentioned in the al-Qur’an, meaning, “O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful” (al-Hujurat, 49:12).
3. Abstain from constantly protesting in a communication - as narrated by Imam Tabrani, the Prophet SAW exhorted, “*Abstain from constantly protesting as wisdom would not be gained by that and slander cannot be avoided by it.*” And an attitude of constant protesting would make one’s personality weak.
4. Be a good listener - as exhorted by Allah SWT, meaning, “Who listens to speech and follows the best of it. Those are the ones Allah has guided, and those are people of understanding” (al-Zumar, 39:18).
5. To make communication a tool for enticing humankind towards the truth. Allah SWT exhorted, meaning, “And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah and does righteousness and says, “Indeed, I am of the Muslims” (Fussilat, 41:33).

Similar to the views about the art of communication by Abidin (2007), Ariffin (2007) also emphasised on communication etiquette as an important element in the art of communication. According to Ariffin (2007:127), some verses in the al-Qur’an and Hadith had outlined several principles and communication etiquette in Islam. Among those that are according to the wisdom of the al-Qur’an are those based on the verses in surah al-Baqarah (2:83)³ and surah al-Ankabut (29:46)⁴, which had emphasised two principles and the main etiquette in communication. First was to deliver information well and to be noble minded; the second was to insert religious preaching in the contents of the message to be delivered. Besides that, a Hadith narrated by Saidatina Aisyah r.a.h carried the following meaning.

“The Prophet SAW was not one of despicable character and was never a despicable character. His Highness did not like to raise HIS voice in the marketplace, HE did not avenge

³ And [recall] when We took the covenant from the Children of Israel, [enjoining upon them], “Do not worship except Allah; and to parents do good and to relatives, orphans, and the needy. And speak to people good [words] and establish prayer and give zakah.” Then you turned away, except a few of you, and you were refusing **(al-Baqarah, 2:83)**

⁴ “And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them, and say, “We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one; and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him” (al-Ankabut, 29:46)

evil deeds with evil deeds but did like to forgive and pardon" (This Hadith was recorded by at-Tirmidhiy. Imam at-Thirmidhiy stated that this Hadith is *hasan shahih*, Syamil Muhammadiyah Scriptures, Hadis 333:398)

This Hadith shows that the Prophet SAW had stressed on the element of communication etiquette. The Prophet SAW was sent to communicate the divine deliverance from Allah SWT to humankind and had laid great significance on etiquette, which determined the effectiveness of a communication process. Thus, communication etiquette has an important role in the life of humans. The emphasis on Islamic-based art of communication is clearly very deep as it comprises the morality (mannerliness) of the communicator, contents of the communication and communication etiquette. Although discussions on Islamic-based art of communication are found in literary works, these discussions focus more on preaching in the form of communications. This shows that discussions on the art of communication are exclusive to preaching, even though actual discussions and applications of Islamic-based art of communication are more than that and encompasses a wide scope. Hence, an Islamic-based art of communication framework needs to be developed in order to discuss the aspects of an Islamic-based art of communication from a wider scope.

An Analysis of The Islamic-Based Art of Communication Framework

After identifying the current definition of the art of communication based on the conventional paradigm, this working paper defined and elaborated the Islamic-based art of communication concept. This section had elaborated on the analysis regarding the development of the framework. A form of an Islamic-based discussion should be in line with syariat Islam. When discussing the Islamic-based art of communication framework, the formation as well as the elements involved in developing the framework should be subjected to epistemological sources of Islamic knowledge and its contents should be indefeasible. The Hadith should explain the contents of the al-Qur'an through acclamations, sayings or utterances and actions of the Prophet SAW. In surah al-Nisa verse 59, Allah SWT exhorted, meaning,

"O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result" (an-Nisa", 4:59).

The religious decree according to surah an-Nisa verse 59 actually shows that the al-Qur'an and Hadith are the main guides for a faithful person. Hence, the art of communication framework should be built based on epistemological sources of Islamic knowledge, which is the al-Qur'an and Hadith, in order to produce an Islamic-based art of communication framework.

According to Salleh (2003:41), each academic discipline needs a theoretical or conceptual framework; hence, the Islamic-based art of communication framework should be based on *fardu ain* knowledge, which is generally divided into three main branches, namely Tauhid (monotheism), Fiqh (jurisprudence) and Tasawuf (sufi). In knowledge pertaining to communication, the main elements are basically the communicator (*sender of message*), communication (*message*) and audience (*receiver*). However, in discussions on Islamic-based art of communication, these three elements are not enough to ensure the

dissemination of Islamic elements in the art of communication if the discussions only centered on the communicator, the communication and the audience. Based on previous discussions and after some examination, the Islamic-based art of communication focused more on the morality, etiquette and contents found in the art of communication. Therefore, building an Islamic-based art of communication framework in this study had focused on discussions based the three main elements in the Islamic-based art of communication, which was namely the morality (mannerliness) of the communicator, contents of the communication and communication etiquette. Further elaborations concerning the elements in Islamic-based art of communication used in the formulation of the framework are as follows.

(a) Morality (Mannerliness) of the Communicator

Imam al-Ghazali once said that morality is a position that is steadfast in the mind and portrays good actions without needing any thinking or further examination. When an action is good and laudable according to syarak, then that action is an honourable act of morality and if it is of the contrary, then it is an unworthy and immoral act (Omar, 2010:25). Salleh (2003:42) mentioned that morality leads humankind to discard their despicable characteristics (*mazmumah*) and replace them with laudable characteristics (*mahmudah*). Examination of morality is important because faith (*iman*), beliefs (*akidah*) and worship (*ibadah*) would be taken for granted if morality is upheld; for example in a particular communication process, that is dominated by obnoxious feelings (*riak*⁵), then surely the potential communication would become a form of worship that is wasted or of no consequence (Omar, 2010:81). Therefore, when formulating the fundamentals of Islamic-based art of communication, the element of delivering the message should be followed by morality that is in line with syariat Islam. The existence of the morality aspect could be determined by the language used as well as the delivery technique.

(b) Contents of the Communication

Communication is an important procedure in delivering and transferring information from a source to a receiver (Yusof, 2013:271). Hence, through an Islamic-based art of communication approach used to deliver a message, the contents of the message should be examined so that it is in line with syariat Islam. For example, the al-Qur'an and Hadith have outlined numerous examples that could be used in the contents of a message found in a communication process. Among the examples of guidelines related to the contents of a message based on the verses of the al-Qur'an are found in surah al-'Asr⁶, which emphasises that the contents of a message should be truthful in nature. In reality, sources of Islamic knowledge have adduced numerous guidelines that could become a guide or a food-for-thought. Hence, the contents of the message should be given due attention based on sources of Islamic knowledge so that the fundamentals of Islamic-based art of communication could be formed.

⁵ *Riak* refers to any action implemented without an intention to seek the blessings of Allah SWT, but instead to seek the adoration and popularity among society (al-Ma'un, 107:6)

⁶ According to surah al-'Asr verse 3, Allah SWT exhorted meaning, "Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience".

(c) Communication Etiquette

Islam is a religion that weighs heavily on etiquette, as highlighted in the al-Qur'an itself concerning Islamiyah etiquette. For example, etiquette related to congregating (4:410, 6:68, 23:67, 24:62, 58:8, 58:11), walking (4:36, 17:37, 25:63, 31:18, 31:19) and seeking permission (24:27, 24:28, 24:58, 24:59, 33:53). Etiquette in general is how (procedures) an individual reacts to something. Maintaining etiquette during a proceeding facilitates the smooth-flow and eventual success of the proceedings. Besides communication, the sources of Islamic knowledge have strongly emphasised on etiquette. Hence, communication etiquette is the main element outlined in the framework of this working paper in efforts to build the fundamentals of an Islamic-based communication.

Through discussions and elaborating on the main elements of an Islamic-based art of communication; thus, the framework for an Islamic-based art of communication was built, as shown in Diagram 1.

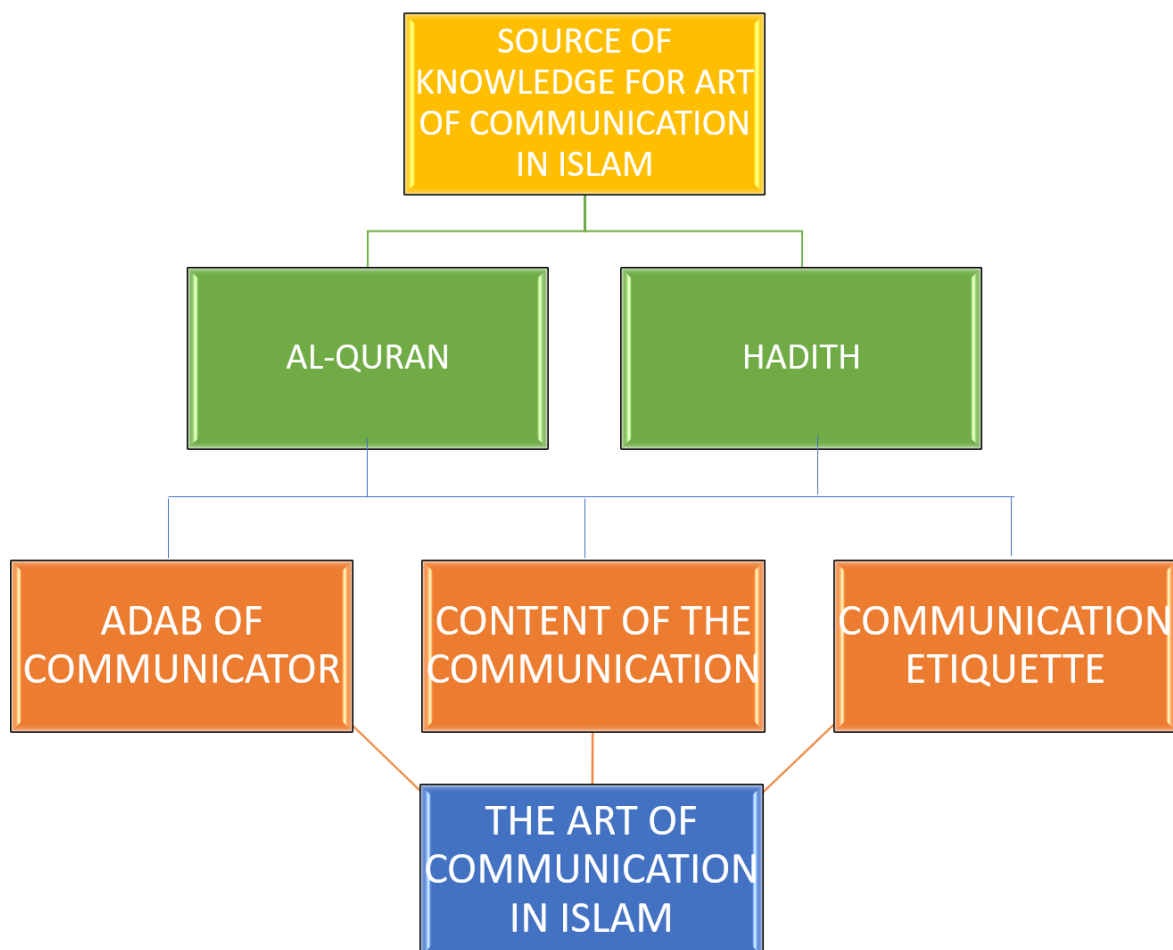


Diagram 1: Framework for the Islamic-based art of communication

According to Diagram 1, it could be concluded that with this framework, the art of communication would be examined through the al-Qur'an and Hadith in order to produce an Islamic-based art of communication. Discussions on the Islamic-based art of

communication based on this framework evolves around three main elements, namely the morality (mannerliness) of the communicator, contents of the communication and communication etiquette. Hence, this is the framework for the Islamic-based art of communication.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, communication could be considered as a critical field that should be subjected to Islamic principles. Hence, communication without the art would have a lesser impact on the communication process, which then necessitates the need for an Islamic-based art of communication. This type of communication is important as it is a form of contributing knowledge related to Islamic-based communication. Management that usually practices a communication process, especially Islamic management, needs its own Islamic-based art of communication when governing an organization. In reality, syariat Islam is concise and comprehensive but there are innumerable sources of Islam that have not been used for the benefit of Muslims. This working paper has managed to form a framework for Islamic-based art of communication by examining the al-Qur'an and Hadith and relating these premier sources to the main elements in the art of communication, such as the morality (mannerliness) of the communicator, contents of the communication and the communication etiquette.

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