

# Digital Tabayyun in Islamic Religious Education: A Framework for Developing Elementary School Students' Information Verification Skills

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## ABSTRACT

Elementary school students are increasingly exposed to digital information, making the ability to verify information an important educational concern. In Islamic Religious Education (IRE), the concept of tabayyun provides a foundation for connecting information verification with ethical responsibility. This study aims to develop a conceptual framework for integrating digital tabayyun into elementary IRE. It employs a conceptual-integrative literature review of Islamic sources, research on information verification, developmental psychology, character education, and Indonesian curriculum documents. The findings formulate digital tabayyun as a combination of verification skills and ethical responsibility. The proposed framework consists of four steps: Stop, Ask, Check, and Decide (SACD), adapted to students' learning phases. It also identifies opportunities to integrate these steps into the five elements of IRE and translates them into a learning model and an assessment rubric. The framework offers a conceptual basis for guiding students to evaluate information and make responsible decisions before sharing it. However, its suitability and effectiveness require further validation and empirical testing.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Children increasingly encounter digital information through online platforms and messaging applications. Although digital connectivity offers learning opportunities, it also exposes children to misleading information that may be shared without adequate verification. The Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association reported internet penetration of 79.5% in 2024, equivalent to approximately 221.56 million users (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia, 2024). This figure indicates the broad relevance of digital connectivity but should not be interpreted as a direct measure of internet use among elementary school students. The risks associated with misinformation are illustrated by Vosoughi et al. (2018), who found that false news spread farther, faster, and more broadly than true news on Twitter. Although their study did not focus on children, its findings underscore the importance of developing habits of careful information evaluation before sharing content. (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Research has shown that information-verification skills can be developed through structured instruction. Wineburg and McGrew (2019) found that professional fact-checkers assess online credibility by consulting sources beyond the original webpage, a practice known as lateral reading. Subsequent studies have reported improvements in students' credibility assessments following digital literacy interventions, particularly among secondary school students and adults (Breakstone et al., 2021; Guess et al., 2020; Wineburg et al., 2022). Brodsky et al. (2023) also reported lasting improvements among Canadian middle- and high-school students. However, these findings cannot automatically be generalized to elementary school learners, whose verification skills require developmentally appropriate instruction and guidance (Brodsky et al., 2023). In Indonesian Islamic Religious Education (IRE or *Pendidikan Agama Islam* (PAI)), studies have

examined digital *tabayyun*, including its relationship with students' attitudes and the internalization of religious values (Dhia Fauziah et al., 2026; Herman et al., 2025; Ilman & Kanus, 2026). Research on elementary PAI has also explored problem-based learning, although with different emphases, such as empathy and moderate reasoning (Prawira et al., 2025). The concept of *tabayyun* provides an Islamic normative foundation for addressing information verification. Qur'an 49:6 instructs believers to examine reports before acting upon them, while Qur'an 17:36 emphasizes the responsibility not to follow matters without knowledge. Together, these principles support an understanding of *tabayyun* that encompasses epistemic responsibility, ethical consideration, and accountability for the consequences of accepting or sharing information (Shihab, 2002). This understanding complements character education, which emphasizes moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral action (Lickona, 2013). Developmental perspectives further suggest that elementary-age children benefit from concrete examples and guided learning before undertaking more independent tasks (Piaget & Inhelder, 2000; Vygotskii et al., 1978). Meanwhile, Caulfield's (2019) SIFT framework (Stop, Investigate the source, Find better coverage, and Trace claims) offers practical guidance for evaluating online information (Caulfield, 2019). These perspectives provide complementary foundations for connecting information-verification skills with Islamic values and age-appropriate learning.

Despite these contributions, further conceptual development is needed to connect *tabayyun* with observable verification practices for elementary school students. The literature reviewed for this study suggests three relevant issues: digital *tabayyun* research has largely focused on older students; the relationship between religious values and observable verification performance requires further clarification; and developmentally differentiated procedures that combine evidence evaluation with ethical decision-making need to be formulated for elementary PAI. These issues are presented as gaps identified in the literature examined, rather than as claims that no relevant studies exist. To address these issues, this study develops a conceptual framework that integrates Islamic normative sources, information-verification practices, character education, and developmental considerations. Its principal contribution is the proposed four-step procedure: Stop, Ask, Check, and Decide (SACD), which connects the examination of information with responsible decisions about whether to share it. The framework differentiates expectations across elementary learning phases and identifies opportunities for integration into the five elements of PAI: the Qur'an and Hadith, faith, morals, fiqh, and Islamic cultural history. It also proposes a learning model and an assessment rubric to support future instructional development. These components are conceptual proposals and have not yet been empirically validated. Accordingly, this study addresses three questions: (1) How can digital *tabayyun* be conceptualized and operationalized as an information-verification competence for elementary school students? (2) How can its proposed steps be integrated into the five elements of PAI? and (3) How can the framework be translated into a learning model and an assessment rubric appropriate to elementary learning phases? Through a conceptual-integrative literature review, the study aims to provide a foundation for subsequent expert validation and empirical testing.

## 2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative, conceptual-integrative literature review (Zed, 2014). The formation of the framework follows the procedure of conceptual framework analysis (Jabareen, 2009): The sources comprised the Qur'an, hadith, classical and contemporary exegesis, Indonesian curriculum policy documents, and literature on information verification, digital literacy, developmental psychology, character education, and digital *tabayyun* in Islamic Religious Education (IRE). Searches were conducted through Google Scholar, Google Search, journal portals, and reference lists using Indonesian and English keywords related to *tabayyun*, IRE, digital literacy, information verification, lateral reading, source evaluation, and elementary education. Journal

publications from 2016-2026 were prioritized, while primary Islamic sources, theoretical and methodological works, and policy documents were selected without a year restriction. The documented search took place on October 8, 2026. Google Scholar and Google Search yielded 29 counted records (17 and 12, respectively); 22 were retained and 7 excluded. Additional manual searches were conducted, but their record counts were not documented. Sources were selected for relevance, traceable bibliographic information, and analytical contribution, while primary Islamic, policy, and theoretical sources were selected purposively. Data were analyzed through directed content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019), using Lickona's moral dimensions: knowing, feeling, and action, and four verification components: pausing, assessing sources, comparing information, and making decisions. Following Miles and Huberman (Miles et al., 2014), the analysis involved data reduction, analytical matrices, and conclusion drawing. The synthesis distinguished Islamic principles, empirical findings from studies involving other age groups, and the authors' conceptual inferences. These informed the proposed digital *tabayyun* procedure, its integration into IRE, a learning model, and an assessment rubric. Analytical credibility was supported by comparing Islamic sources with literature on information verification and developmental psychology, drawing on the perspectives of Lickona, Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bandura. The framework and rubric have not yet undergone expert validation or empirical testing; their suitability and effectiveness therefore remain to be established.

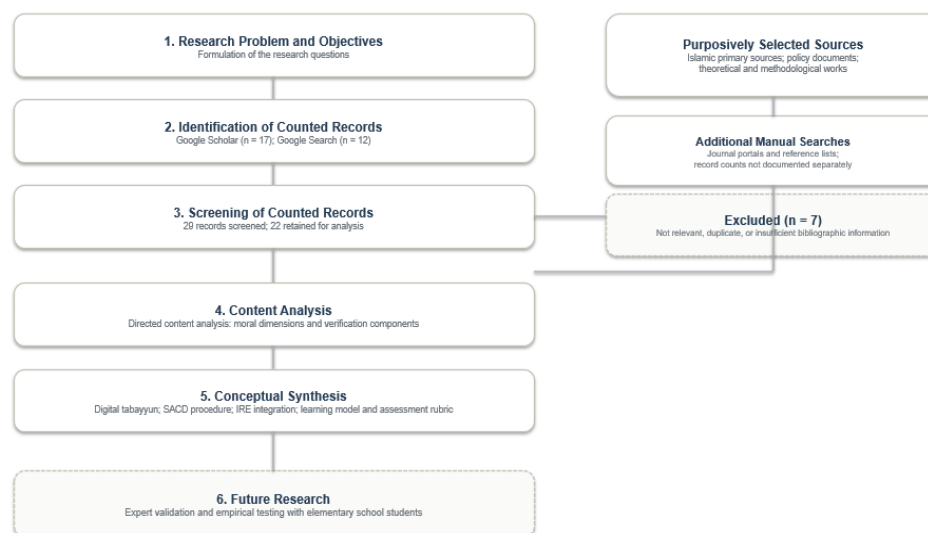


Figure 1. Summarizes the research process.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 RESULTS

The results are presented according to three research objectives. The data displayed are the results of literature analysis and synthesis, not raw data, and are presented in a table.

##### 3.1.1 Concept and operationalization of digital tabayyun

The analysis of the studies described in the Introduction shows three patterns. First, lateral reading instruction showed consistent effects at the junior high school to adult levels (Breakstone et al., 2021; Brodsky et al., 2023; Guess et al., 2020; Kohnen et al., 2020; Wineburg et al., 2022), noting that the beginner strategy persists and intention does not automatically become behavior. Second, the digital tabayyun study focused on attitudes at the junior high school level and above and showed a small improvement (Dhia Fauziah et al., 2026). Third, no studies were found that tied tabayyun

scores to evidence-based verification procedures at the elementary level. These three patterns form the basis for the formulation of the following concepts and procedures. The synthesis results in the following working definition: digital tabayyun is an ethical disposition and verification competence to delay, trace sources, compare evidence, and decide responsibly before receiving or sharing information in the digital space, which is rooted in the values of faith and noble morals. The value dimension includes prudence, honesty, trust, and honor keeping; the skill dimension includes pause, assessing sources, comparing sources, and deciding. The analysis establishes three conceptual boundaries: digital tabayyun is not an attitude of suspicion towards all information, but rather the ability to distinguish news that is worthy of trust from what is not clear; not the submission of judgment to authority, as asking trusted adults serves as a scaffolding towards understanding of the evidence; and it is not a judgment of the personal, so that the word “wicked” in verse is not taught as a label for a particular person and students judge news and its evidence, not stigmatize the sender. The verification steps are simplified into four steps paired with guide questions and tiered according to the learning phase (Table 1).

**Table 1.** SACD steps, guide questions, and expectations according to learning phases

| Steps  | Guide questions for students                                                           | Phase A (grades I–II, ± 6–8 years)                     | Phase B (grades III–IV, ± 8–10 years)                  | Phase C (grades V–VI, ± 10–12 years)                                                               |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Stop   | "I'm shocked, scared, or angry. I take a breath first; don't send it right away."      | Recognize feelings and restrain yourself with guidance | Pause self-paced on known situations                   | Pausing yourself on new situations                                                                 |
| Ask    | "Who made this? Where did he know it? Who is a trusted adult I can ask?"               | Ask a teacher or parent                                | Mention the creator of the news and ask the basics     | Assess whether the creator of the news has a basis and interests                                   |
| Check  | "Are there any other reliable sources that say the same thing? What is the proof?"     | The teacher demonstrates (not yet independent)         | Match with a single source of comparison from teachers | Comparing two or three curated sources; Enrichment, Simply trace the origin of an image or message |
| Decide | "Is this true, beneficial, and not hurting people? If I'm not sure, I don't share it." | Not forwarding unclear                                 | Conveying a simple reason                              | Giving reasons associated with the value of tabayyun                                               |

The basis of the value and the status of the evidence for each step are different. Stop is based on the hadith of al-Tirmidhi about haste and the command of fa-tabayyanu, paired with Stop and pause accuracy where the evidence comes from adults (Al-Tirmidzi, 2002). Question is based on the honesty of the news bearer and trust, based on developmental evidence about the child's assessment of the informant, not evidence of intervention. The check is based on QS. Al-Isra': 36 and is matched with Find better coverage or lateral reading whose evidence comes from junior high school students to adults. Decide based on QS. Al-Hujurat: 6 and QS. Qaf: 18, does not have a direct equivalent in the verification heuristic, and has the status of a normative foundation. SACD is not synonymous with SIFT. Ask to simplify source investigation according to the child's capacity; Check is commensurate with Find better coverage, while tracing to the origin context (Trace) is only Phase C enrichment; Decide that it does not exist in SIFT and comes from the ethical and accountability dimension of tabayyun. All Phase B and C assignments use materials curated by teachers, not free internet searches, for the sake of safety and conformity with the child's capacity.

### 3.1.2 Integration points in PAI and Ethics

The latest learning outcomes group the content of PAI and Ethics into five elements: the Qur'an and Hadith, Faith, Morals, Fiqh, and History of Islamic Civilization (Permendikdasmen No

13 Tahun 2025, 2025). Table 2 shows that BTCP can be integrated into all five without adding subjects.

**Table 2. Integration of digital tabayyun in the five elements of PAI and Ethics**

| Element                       | Sample material                                                                                                      | Form of integration                                                                                                | Focus SACD                             |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Al-Qur'an and Hadith          | QS. Al-Hujurat: 6; QS. Al-Isra': 36 (Phase C); Hadith about narrating everything that is heard                       | Interpreting the verse in the child's language; connecting the meaning of the verse with the BTCP card             | All steps; emphasis on Stop and Decide |
| Akidah                        | Faith in the angels who record charity; QS. Qaf: 18                                                                  | Case studies of "bird news" and chain messaging                                                                    | Decide                                 |
| Akhlaq                        | Honesty, trustworthiness, and avoidance of prejudice                                                                 | The teacher demonstrates (not yet independent)                                                                     | Stop, Ask, Decide                      |
| Fikih                         | Ensure before worship, for example the time of prayer and the direction of the Qibla                                 | Analogy: doubt means to ask or check; class agreement "rules of sharing news"                                      | Ask, Check                             |
| Sejarah Peradaban Islam (SKI) | The story of the messenger to the Banu al-Mushthaliq; The tradition of scholars asking the messenger of news (isnad) | Dramatization and then transfer to digital situations; isnad as a pedagogical analogy, not methodological equality |                                        |

One area that is typical of PAI is online religious content verification. The author proposes that in Phase C, students be trained to ask questions about religious messages: who is the speaker, whether the postulate is mentioned, and whether religious teachers can confirm it. This proposal is the author's inference that needs to be tested.

### 3.1.3 Learninf Models and Assessment Rubrics

The five-stage model combines Lickona's three-dimensional with guided verification exercises (Table 3). One cycle is designed for one to two meetings; habituation entails repeating the cycle on different materials, which is a design assumption.

**Table 3. Digital tabayyun reinforcement learning model**

| Stages                        | Core activities                                                                                                                 | Dimensions                   | Focus SACD                | Proof of learning                        |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Listening to stories and ayat | The teacher tells the story of the consequences of acting without clarification and introduces the meaning of QS. Al-Hujurat: 6 | Moral knowledge              | Introduction of all steps | Students explain why tabayyun is ordered |
| Recognize the problem         | News of the teacher's simulation; the student is aware of his feelings                                                          | Moral feelings               | Stop                      | Feeling card; observed pause             |
| Guided verification practices | Small groups apply Ask and Check on curated materials with BTCP cards                                                           | Skills                       | Ask, Check                | Verification worksheet                   |
| Reflection on values          | Connecting tabayyun honestly and trustfully; Compiling commitments                                                              | Moral knowledge and feelings | Decide                    | Commitment and why                       |
| Real action and habituation   | "Tabayyun First, Just Share" posters, class agreements, home activity sheets                                                    | Moral action                 | All Steps                 | Periodic observation with rubrics        |

For example, in Phase A without a gadget, the teacher reads a "bird's-eye news" that a friend is hiding his friend's supplies; students hold back, ask the teacher, and decide not to tell them before it's clear. In Phase C, the teacher prepares a screenshot of a fictitious chain message without the

sender's name; the student recognizes his fear, realizes there is no creator or evidence, compares it to the two sources the teacher prepared, and then decides not to forward it. In both scenarios, the teacher models checking behavior before sharing. A rubric of five indicators on a three-level scale was compiled to measure the results (Table 4) and read together with Table 1, as a score of 3 in Phase A does not demand the same as a score of 3 in Phase C

**Table 4.** Rubric of information verification capability indicators

| Indicator                        | Score 1 (Starting to improve) | Score 2 (Improved)        | Score 3 (Dominate)                                  |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Stop before sharing              | Instantly deploy without lag  | Stop after being reminded | Stop on your own                                    |
| Asking for sources               | Not asking for sources        | Ask the source if guided  | Identify sources and assess the basis of the report |
| Check to other sources           | Not checking                  | Check a single source     | Compare more than one source                        |
| Making ethical decisions         | Unjustified decisions         | Simple reason             | The reason is associated with the value of tabayyun |
| Application of value in behavior | Invisible                     | Occasional appearance     | Looks consistent                                    |

The proposed framework and assessment rubric were developed through conceptual synthesis of the reviewed literature. Neither has yet been validated by experts or tested directly with elementary school students. Therefore, they should be regarded as conceptual proposals rather than validated instructional or assessment instruments. Their content validity, developmental appropriateness, and practical effectiveness require further expert review and empirical testing.

## 3.2 DISCUSSION

### 3.2.1 Relationship of results to basic concepts

Existing studies explain how to verify information but provide less guidance on the ethical responsibility to consider its impact on others. The ethical and accountability dimensions of tabayyun (Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 6; Q.S. Qaf: 18) inform the proposed Decide step. The five-stage learning model draws on Lickona's (2013) dimensions of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Pausing before responding is consistent with evidence that false news can trigger emotional reactions (Koenig & Harris, 2005; Vosoughi et al., 2018). The differentiated learning phases draw on Piaget and Inhelder's (2000) developmental theory and Vygotsky et al.'s (1978) concept of scaffolding (Piaget & Inhelder, 2000; Vygotskiĭ et al., 1978). However, these phases are theory-informed design proposals, not an empirically established developmental sequence, and require validation with elementary school students. The Ask step is informed by research on children's evaluation of informant reliability (Koenig & Harris, 2005), while developmental differences in critical evaluation support the need for guidance (Mills, 2013). Teacher modeling is therefore proposed as an implementation condition (Khozin et al., 2024). The integration of the five PAI elements connects religious knowledge and moral values with students' learning experiences (Lickona, 2013). Qur'anic verses and hadith support moral understanding, while stories and case studies provide opportunities to explore moral responses. The use of isnad as an analogy for source checking is pedagogical, not methodological. Likewise, applying tabayyun to online religious content remains a conceptual inference requiring further examination. Table 4 translates these ideas into assessment indicators covering verification skills, ethical decision-making, and the application of values in behavior.

### 3.2.2 Compatibility and conflict with other studies

The proposed framework is consistent with studies showing that lateral reading and source comparison can be taught (Brodsky et al., 2023; Kohnen et al., 2020; Wineburg et al., 2022), as well

as evidence linking attention to accuracy with more discerning sharing decisions (Pennycook et al., 2021). McGrew's (2024) emphasis on teacher education also highlights the importance of teacher readiness. However, five distinctions remain (McGrew, 2024). First, brief interventions may not produce lasting verification habits (Kohnen et al., 2020), and intentions do not necessarily translate into behavior (Brodsky et al., 2023). Although Fauziah et al. (2026) reported changes in tabayyun attitudes, their single-group pre-post design does not establish causality. The need for repeated practice is therefore a proposition for future testing, not an established finding. Second, unlike lateral-reading approaches that use open-web browsing, the proposed framework relies on teacher-curated materials to support child safety. Whether this approach transfers to real-world information environments remains unknown. Third, although the framework adds ethical decision-making to verification skills, there is no empirical evidence yet that this integration improves students' behavior. Fourth, previous digital tabayyun research has examined attitudes, whereas this study proposes observable verification performance as an assessment focus. This is a difference in research emphasis, not evidence that one approach is superior. Fifth, this study interprets Q.S. Al-Hujurat (49): 6 as providing a broader educational basis for evaluating consequential information, while classical tafsir and fiqh discussions emphasize the context of reports from unreliable or transgressive sources. This broader application is the authors' interpretive proposal, not a replacement for classical interpretations, and warrants further scholarly examination.

### **3.2.3 Theoretical implications and implementation**

This study proposes three conceptual contributions. First, digital tabayyun is conceptualized as a construct integrating ethical values and information-verification skills. Second, the Stop, Ask, Check, and Decide (SACD) procedure adapts verification heuristics to elementary education, with the evidentiary basis and limitations of each component identified in Table 1. Third, the framework generates four propositions for future empirical investigation. These propositions are derived from the conceptual synthesis and should not be interpreted as established empirical findings: Integrating tabayyun values with structured verification exercises may support information-verification performance more effectively than value instruction or technical verification practice alone; Students' verification performance may depend on the alignment of learning expectations with their developmental phase and the gradual reduction of teacher guidance; Teacher modeling and family reinforcement may influence whether verification practices transfer from classroom activities to everyday situations; Integrating ethical responsibility into verification instruction may help students distinguish between credible and unsupported information without encouraging generalized distrust. These propositions require empirical testing before conclusions can be drawn about their validity or effectiveness. In practical terms, teachers may use SACD cards, teacher-curated materials, and guided examples as starting points for instructional design. For Phase A, activities may be conducted without digital devices through storytelling and classroom simulations. Schools may consider incorporating repeated practice into co-curricular activities and school culture, supported by family engagement and teacher training in information literacy. These suggestions represent proposed applications of the framework and have not yet been evaluated through implementation research.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This study conceptualizes digital tabayyun as an integration of ethical values and information-verification skills, operationalized through four steps: Stop, Ask, Check, and Decide (SACD). The proposed framework differentiates learning expectations across elementary school phases and identifies opportunities for integration into the five elements of Islamic Religious Education (IRE). It also provides a five-stage learning model and an assessment rubric. These contributions are conceptual proposals rather than empirically validated outcomes. The study is limited by its literature-based design, the possibility of missing relevant studies, and the reliance of some proposed

learning expectations on evidence from older age groups. The framework and rubric have not yet undergone expert validation or direct testing with elementary school students. Future research should validate the rubric with IRE experts and elementary school teachers, assess the developmental appropriateness of the proposed learning phases, and test the framework through classroom-based or comparative studies using observable verification performance rather than attitudes alone.

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