

THE ROLE OF DAKHAH COMMUNICATION IN BUILDING SOCIAL AWARENESS OF DIGITAL SOCIETY

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Abstract

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This study aims to analyze the role of da'wah communication in building social awareness in digital communities, particularly in the context of the shift in the da'wah paradigm from conventional methods to a digital approach. The main focus of this research is how social media such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok have become new spaces for disseminating Islamic values that can foster empathy, solidarity, and social justice in a modern, fast-paced and fragmented society. The method used in this study is a literature review (library research) with a normative approach, namely examining various scientific literature, previous research results, and relevant empirical data to understand the dynamics of digital da'wah communication. The analysis was carried out systematically by examining Islamic communication theories, digital literacy, and contemporary da'wah practices. The results show that digital da'wah plays a significant role in raising social awareness, especially through popular figures such as Ustadz Hanan Attaki, Gus Baha, and Habib Husein Ja'far who use empathetic narratives and creative visual approaches. However, challenges such as disinformation, social polarization, and the commercialization of religion remain major obstacles. Consequently, this research emphasizes the importance of strengthening digital literacy for preachers, the ethics of preaching communication, and regulatory support so that digital preaching can become an instrument of inclusive and sustainable social change.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has brought about fundamental changes in the way humans interact, communicate, and build collective awareness in social spaces. This transformation has given rise to a phenomenon known as *the digital society*, a community whose social, economic, and cultural activities are heavily dependent on digital technology (Arbi & Amrullah, 2024). Amidst the rapid flow of information and value disruption, da'wah, as a spiritual communication activity, has experienced a significant paradigm shift. While da'wah was previously carried out



primarily through pulpits and conventional religious study groups, da'wah now demands adaptation through digital media to reach a broader, more dynamic, and more critical audience. This shift demands a da'wah communication model that not only conveys religious messages but also builds social awareness, morals, and empathy in an increasingly individualistic society.

In this context, da'wah communication plays a strategic role as an instrument of social transformation. Islam, as a religion of mercy for all the worlds, positions da'wah not only as the dissemination of religious teachings, but also as a process of developing social character that is just and empathetic towards others. In the digital era, da'wah messages are no longer limited to normative texts but must also be contextualized within social issues such as poverty, digital inequality, moral crisis, and intolerance. Therefore, da'wah in the digital era needs to adapt to participatory and interactive forms of communication to substantively internalize Islamic values amidst the complexities of modern society.

Changes in society's communication patterns, which are more visual, fast, and interactive, also demand innovative da'wah strategies. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and podcasts have become new spaces for effective da'wah if managed with a humanistic and creative approach. The emergence of da'wah influencers such as Ustadz Hanan Attaki, Gus Baha, and Habib Husein Ja'far demonstrates that digital communities are more receptive to religious messages delivered in a dialogical, emotional, and relevant style to everyday life (Pinanditha, 2023). This phenomenon emphasizes that da'wah is no longer sufficient with a textual approach, but must utilize *storytelling*, empathetic narratives, and engaging visualizations so that religious messages can arouse the social and moral awareness of the digital public (Fabriar, 2024).

Furthermore, social awareness in Islam has profound meaning as a reflection of faith and the implementation of brotherhood. Islam emphasizes the importance of social responsibility through values such as *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, social justice, solidarity, and concern for others (Hutabalian et al., 2025). In the context of a digital society often trapped in hedonism and egocentrism, effective da'wah communication can be a moral bridge to rekindle empathy and social responsibility. Da'wah that emphasizes the values of humanity and justice can encourage digital communities to engage in social activities such as humanitarian *crowdfunding*, digital philanthropy movements, and literacy campaigns that foster awareness of contemporary social issues (Al Mubarak, 2024).

However, behind these significant opportunities, there are serious challenges in the practice of digital da'wah. Disinformation, hate speech, social polarization, and the commercialization of religion often obscure the essence of da'wah itself. Much religious content goes viral not because of its depth of substance, but because of sensation and controversy. This highlights the need for digital literacy for da'wah practitioners, strengthening the ethics of da'wah communication, and regulation by authoritative institutions to ensure the digital space remains a healthy and educational medium for da'wah. Strengthening da'wah practitioners' capacity to understand social media algorithms, audience behavior, and digital communication techniques is essential for da'wah to compete with the flow of secular information and non-educational content.

Within the framework of da'wah strategies, technology-based communication approaches such as *live streaming*, *short videos*, and *podcasts* enable message delivery that is more relevant and adaptive to audience needs. Collaborative da'wah with social institutions, youth communities, and humanitarian movements also provides a concrete

form of integrating da'wah and social awareness. Case studies in Indonesia and developing countries such as Malaysia and Egypt demonstrate that collaborative digital da'wah models can build solidarity across social classes and strengthen community participation in social movements based on Islamic values (Muhibudin et al., 2025).

In this state-of-the-art research, the existence of da'wah communication in digital society represents a new paradigm for contemporary Islamic da'wah. Unlike the traditional top-down da'wah model, digital da'wah operates horizontally and participatively, forming a dynamic social network between da'wah practitioners and audiences. Recent research shows that the success of digital da'wah is measured not only by the number of followers, but also by the extent to which the da'wah message is able to internalize the values of empathy, justice, and social solidarity in people's behavior. In this context, this research contributes to enriching the contemporary da'wah literature by emphasizing the dimension of social awareness as the core of da'wah transformation in the digital era.

The urgency of this research lies in the normative motivation to restore da'wah as an instrument of just and civilized social change. Amidst the fragmentation of values and increasing digital individualism, da'wah communication is an effective means of building collective social awareness based on Islamic teachings. This research is expected to provide conceptual and practical contributions to the development of da'wah communication theory, as well as serve as a guideline for digital da'wah practitioners in designing humanistic, adaptive, and socially impactful communication strategies. Thus, da'wah is not merely an activity of spreading religious teachings, but also a driving force for social and moral awareness in an inclusive and ethical digital society.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods The method used in this study is *qualitative-descriptive and normative*, designed to collect, evaluate, and synthesize theoretical evidence and policy documents relevant to the role of da'wah communication in building social awareness of digital society. As a first step, researchers formulated systematic core and derivative keywords with synonymous expansion in Indonesian and English to capture cross-disciplinary literature; literature searches were conducted on verified academic databases and repositories such as Scopus, Google Scholar, DOAJ, SINTA), university libraries, policy documents (Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology), as well as digital platform archives (YouTube, Instagram, podcasts) to capture a representative corpus of da'wah content. Inclusion criteria were explicitly set: topical relevance to the concept of da'wah communication and social awareness, source credibility (priority to *peer-reviewed journals*, academic books, institutional reports), full-text availability, and publication period capitalized to capture digital dynamics, while exclusion criteria filtered opinions without empirical references or commercial promotional content that did not add analytical value; All sources that meet the criteria are documented in a bibliographic database along with metadata, a concise abstract, central arguments, and relevance assessments to form a transparent and replicable audit trail.

The literature analysis was conducted through a multi-layered procedure that combined thematic content analysis with discourse analysis and doctrinal studies when dealing with normative texts. The first stage involved critical reading and manual coding to identify themes; the second stage developed a comparative matrix that connected

theoretical findings with practical evidence from the digital corpus (e.g., case studies of viral content, short vs. long-form video formats, and audience engagement indicators); and the third stage conducted an argumentative synthesis that assessed the suitability of digital da'wah practices with Islamic ethical goals and public communication policies. Validity and credibility were maintained through source triangulation (classical texts, empirical research results, and digital content analysis), consultation with experts (preachers, communication experts, media practitioners) to cross-check interpretations, and researcher reflexivity regarding theoretical bias. Methodological limitations such as reliance on secondary literature and potential sampling bias in the digital corpus were addressed, and served as a basis for recommendations for further empirical research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transformation of Da'wah in the Digital Era

The study results show that da'wah has entered a paradigmatic transformation phase: shifting from face-to-face, local practices, and positioning the pulpit as a source of authority that is networked, multimodal, and participatory in the digital space. This medium shift affects three fundamental dimensions: (a) the role of traditional da'wah is not lost but is transformed into one of many sources competing in the attention economy; (b) da'wah messages are compressed into short videos, reels, and audio clips, thus demanding concise storytelling skills; (c) platform algorithms mediate message visibility so that technical strategies (tagging, metadata, engagement) become part of modern da'wah practices (Sholihul Huda & Fil, 2022). Empirical findings from case studies of semi-virtual Qur'an movements (e.g., One Day One Juz/ODOJ) show how groups born in the digital ecosystem are able to become collective movements with short message-based coordination and participant monitoring mechanisms, so that digital da'wah is not merely the dissemination of messages but also a new social infrastructure for collective religious practice.

The practical impact of this transformation is also evident in preachers who are able to "bridge" the digital format and the sensibilities of the younger generation. For example, contemporary studies show that Ustadz Hanan Attaki's platform-aware delivery style has been shown to increase engagement *and* religious interest among millennials, while traditional figures like Gus Baha have gained new audiences through digital recordings and distribution that maintain the depth of his moderate narrative (Sholihul Huda & Fil, 2022). This phenomenon confirms that the effectiveness of digital preaching depends on the synergy between substance (the quality of arguments and values) and format adaptation (understanding of algorithms, visual aesthetics, and everyday language). However, change also carries the risk of commodification of messages and issues that must be considered in formulating digital preaching ethics.

The Concept and Urgency of Social Awareness in Islam

Analysis of normative texts and social literature confirms that social awareness is not an accessory in Islamic tradition but rather the core of ethical praxis: values such as *enjoining good and forbidding evil*, *ta'awun* (conciliation), and social justice are demands of faith that direct agents of da'wah to promote collective responsibility (Mastori, 2019). In the context of a digital society, da'wah has the potential to be a medium for shaping online behavioral norms, respecting the dignity of others, and when messages are designed to inspire empathy and action. Evidence from the literature review suggests that da'wah campaigns paired with action mechanisms are more likely to convert

symbolic resonance into concrete social action; in Indonesia, platforms like Kitabisa are a frequently used channel by religious communities to respond to social needs quickly and measurably. Similar findings emerge from studies in other developing countries, showing that religious narratives connected to welfare actions (education, health, disaster relief) are effective in mobilizing mass participation.

Furthermore, comparative studies confirm that da'wah that only emphasizes doctrine without a path to action tends to produce purely symbolic resonance, while da'wah that includes components of digital literacy education, advocacy, or social services strengthens the transfer of values into behavior. In the context of developing countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan, the integration of religious messages and welfare/education programs in several examples of reformed madrasas shows the potential for more sustainable social change if da'wah communication is designed as part of the public service and education ecosystem (Mastori, 2019). Therefore, the urgency of integrating religious narratives and routes of social action in the digital space is one of the central findings of this study.

Communication Strategy for Islamic Propagation in Digital Society

From the analysis of content and successful practices, three communication strategies emerged as core: (1) utilizing short-form video to trigger emotional resonance while providing long-form content (podcasts, lectures) for in-depth exploration; (2) a rhetorical style that opens up the space for questions, acknowledges the complexity of modern life, and prioritizes narratives of everyday life is more effective in shaping social awareness than top-down moral sermons; (3) collaboration with NGOs, crowdfunding platforms, and community initiatives so that messages are easily followed by concrete actions. These practices are reflected in successful da'wah channels: the combination of personal storytelling, clear calls-to-action, and collaboration with social organizations magnifies the transformative effect. Survey studies also show a preference for short content by young audiences and indicate that format-aware strategies are not just an aesthetic trend but a necessity for effective communication (Fathul Amin & Agus Ali Sururi, 2025).

Contextualizing this strategy in developing countries reveals operational variations: in Indonesia and Malaysia, podcasts and short-video da'wah are often linked to literacy campaigns and fundraising; in Bangladesh, madrasah reforms that combine social activities and modern curricula demonstrate how religious messages can be integrated into local development programs (Amali, n.d.). These collaborative practices require the da'i's managerial capacity (ability to mobilize resources, design campaigns) and adequate digital infrastructure, two aspects that are often hampered in areas lacking infrastructure. Therefore, an effective communication strategy must go beyond delivery techniques; it must encompass the logistical design of social action and impact evaluation mechanisms.

Challenges and Solutions of Digital Preaching

The literature review identified key obstacles: (a) sensational content goes viral more easily, so substantial da'wah messages sometimes lose out; (b) digital spaces facilitate echo-chambers that reinforce polarization; (c) monetization of religious content has the potential to shift value priorities to market logic; (d) a digital literacy gap among preachers and religious leaders that reduces message quality. Global evidence (UNESCO) points to the need for fact-checking training for content creators, while cases in Indonesia

show government intervention urging platforms to improve content moderation to prevent public unrest (Rahmanto et al., 2023) . This emphasizes that the challenge is not only pedagogical, but also policy and technological.

The solutions recommended by the literature are multi-layered and multi-sectoral: (1) digital literacy training for preachers covering ethical content production, fact-checking, and social media crisis management; (2) codes of ethics and production guidelines developed in collaboration with religious institutions, media associations, and platform regulators; (3) platform collaboration with NGOs and universities for counter-disinformation and capacity-building programs; (4) a social impact evaluation model that incorporates participation metrics, donations, and behavioral change indicators as measures of the success of digital preaching. Integrated implementation of these recommendations in international studies shows the potential to reduce the negative effects of digital space and strengthen the function of preaching as an agent of social awareness.

CONCLUSION

This research confirms that da'wah communication in the digital era has undergone a fundamental transformation, where the da'wah paradigm is no longer limited to physical spaces and conventional lectures, but has evolved into an interactive virtual space through social media such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. This shift presents a significant opportunity to expand the reach of da'wah messages while increasing public participation, especially among the younger generation, in understanding Islamic values. Case studies of public figures such as Ustadz Hanan Attaki, Gus Baha, and Habib Husein Ja'far demonstrate that a creative and contextual approach can foster social awareness based on the values of empathy, justice, and solidarity.

Furthermore, this research reveals that social awareness in Islam is not merely a moral aspect, but a concrete manifestation of the responsibility of faith and brotherhood. Effective da'wah in a digital society is da'wah that integrates spiritual values with social realities, using visual, narrative, and dialogical language to ensure an inclusive reception of the Islamic message. Strategies such as collaboration with social movements, humanitarian campaigns, and digital philanthropy have been proven to strengthen collective awareness of social issues, particularly in developing countries still grappling with inequality and low digital literacy.

However, the challenges of digital da'wah cannot be ignored, such as the rise of disinformation, social polarization, and the commercialization of religion. Therefore, strategic steps are needed to strengthen digital literacy for da'wah practitioners, implement ethical da'wah communication, and implement regulatory policies that support the creation of a healthy, inclusive, and educational digital da'wah space. With synergy between da'wah practitioners, da'wah institutions, and the government, digital da'wah can be an effective instrument in building a digital society that is faithful, knowledgeable, and socially conscious.

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