

Da'wah Ethics in the Digital Era in Media Transformation and Moral Governance

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Abstract

Keywords:

Da'wah, ethics, digital media, digital literacy, da'wah strategy

Islamic preaching ethics in the context of digital media transformation and the accompanying moral challenges. Developments in communication technology have shifted preaching from traditional spaces to digital platforms, including social media, online videos, and interactive applications. This shift has opened up opportunities for preaching to reach a wider audience, especially the younger generation, but at the same time has raised serious issues related to ethics, information validity, and the communication style of preachers. This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing a literature review method that incorporates relevant journals, books, and proceedings. The analysis was conducted through a thematic and comparative approach, which identified the main issues: the transformation of da'wah content, technological integration, digital literacy of preachers, and the gap between popular da'wah practices and Islamic ethical principles. The study's results show that some digital da'wah practices tend to prioritize sensationalism and provocative styles, thereby neglecting the principles of wisdom, politeness, and persuasive dialogue as taught in the Qur'an. This study recommends strengthening Islamic digital literacy, fostering da'wah ethics through official institutions, and applying the Prophet Muhammad's gentle, contextual, and respectful da'wah strategies towards the audience. Thus, digital da'wah can serve as an instrument for spreading Islam that is ethical, creative, and remains grounded in the values of *rahmatan lil-'alamin*.

Abstract

Kata Kunci :

Dakwah, etika, media digital, literasi digital, strategi dakwah

Etika dakwah Islam dalam konteks transformasi media digital dan tantangan moral yang menyertainya. Perkembangan teknologi komunikasi telah menggeser dakwah dari ruang tradisional menuju platform digital seperti media sosial, video daring, dan aplikasi interaktif. Pergeseran ini membuka peluang dakwah untuk menjangkau audiens lebih luas, khususnya generasi muda, namun sekaligus memunculkan persoalan serius terkait etika, validitas informasi, dan gaya komunikasi dai. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi literatur terhadap jurnal, buku, dan prosiding yang relevan. Analisis dilakukan melalui pendekatan tematik dan komparatif, yang mengidentifikasi isu utama: transformasi konten dakwah, integrasi teknologi, literasi digital dai, serta kesenjangan antara praktik dakwah populer dan prinsip etika Islam. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian praktik dakwah digital cenderung mengedepankan sensasi dan gaya provokatif sehingga mengabaikan prinsip *hikmah*, kesantunan, dan dialog persuasif sebagaimana diajarkan Al-Qur'an. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan penguatan literasi digital Islami, pembinaan etika dakwah melalui lembaga resmi, serta penerapan strategi dakwah Rasulullah SAW yang lembut, kontekstual, dan penuh penghargaan terhadap audiens. Dengan demikian, dakwah digital dapat berfungsi sebagai instrumen penyebaran Islam yang etis, kreatif, dan tetap berlandaskan nilai *rahmatan lil-'alamin*.

INTRODUCTION

Da'wah is the core of the spread of Islamic teachings, which etymologically means *inviting* or *calling* people to the path of Allah SWT. Substantially, da'wah is not just a rhetorical activity or verbal delivery of messages, but also includes social, educational, and cultural dimensions that aim to shape the morals, character, and civilization of society (Wahidin Saputra, 2011). Islam itself, as the religion of Allah (al-dīn Allah), is not only a belief system but also a way of life that serves as a reference, a framework of values, and a guideline for the behavior of Muslims in both individual and collective lives (Amaliyah, 2015). Therefore, da'wah plays a fundamental role in maintaining the continuity of Islamic teachings, ensuring that they can be understood, practiced, and passed down across generations. However, throughout its history, da'wah has consistently faced evolving social, cultural, and technological dynamics. This change is even more significant in the digital age, when communication technology has changed the way humans interact, access information, and build social meaning. Da'wah is no longer limited to physical spaces such as mosques, taklim assemblies, or community forums, but has shifted to a virtual space known as digital da'wah (Nawaffani, 2023). This transformation presents both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, digital da'wah enables Islamic messages to be disseminated more quickly, extensively, and across geographical boundaries (Pratiwi, 2024). However, on the other hand, this development raises significant ethical and methodological issues that need to be addressed seriously.

The digital age has fundamentally changed the communication landscape. Da'wah messages that were once limited to a specific audience can now reach the global community with just one click. Social media, video platforms, podcasts, and instant messaging applications have become a new arena for Muslim dai and activists to convey Islamic teachings to the younger generation and the general public (Saleh et al., 2022). The book *Islam, Social Media, and Youth: Examining Da'wah Activism in the Online Space* (2020) emphasizes that the digital generation uses social media not only for entertainment but also as a space for religious participation and da'wah. This shows that digital media has strategic potential as a means of spreading Islamic values that are more inclusive and interactive. However, the presence of digital da'wah is not free from problems. The acceleration of information flow is often accompanied by the emergence of da'wah content that is not based on science, uses provocative, abusive, and even degrading language. The phenomenon of preachers who ignore manners and ethics has become increasingly concerning in recent years. Ironically, this style of communication often

gains high popularity among the digital community because it utilizes social media platform algorithms that prioritize sensation and controversy. In fact, the Qur'an emphasizes that da'wah should be conveyed with *wisdom*, good advice, and polite dialogue, not with provocation or insult. This phenomenon has the potential to cause division among the ummah and present a false image of Islam, which is actually *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

From an ethical perspective, the development of digital da'wah presents new challenges related to privacy, data security, message authenticity, and the social implications of using communication technology (Susanto, 2024). Islamic principles, such as etiquette, trust, and respect for private property, are important foundations for addressing the complexity of digital ethics (Susanto, 2024). In this case, the concept of *digital ethics* becomes relevant. Hendayana et al. (2024) explained that digital ethics includes individual awareness to apply netiquette responsibly, maintain integrity, and prioritize the value of kindness in online interactions. Digital ethics is not solely oriented towards legal compliance, but instead on moral awareness to create a safe, healthy, and civilized digital ecosystem. The application of digital ethics in da'wah is becoming increasingly important because the content of da'wah not only involves communication between individuals but also affects the collective understanding of Islam. Mistakes in delivery can lead to misperceptions and even trigger social polarization. Therefore, digital da'wah must integrate sharia principles with the reality of digital platforms. This means that da'wah strategies need to adapt their methods, materials, and media to the characteristics of digital audiences, while still adhering to the principles of politeness, the truthfulness of information, and Sharia values (Pratiwi, 2024; Saleh et al., 2022).

Flexibility and innovation in the da'wah approach are inevitable. Izzuddin and Cahyadi (2025) emphasized that in order for Islamic values to remain relevant in the digital era, da'wah must not be rigid in its format or media. Instead, creativity is needed in utilizing technology, as well as a commitment to maintaining the authenticity of Islamic teachings. This cultural and methodological transformation will determine the extent to which da'wah can meet the spiritual and intellectual needs of the Muslim community amid the global digital revolution (Saleh et al., 2022). Additionally, da'wah institutions play a crucial role. The Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Council (DDII), for example, continues to conduct da'i coaching and training programs to enhance the quality of da'wah. This kind of effort aims to ensure that da'wah is always rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah, while also being adaptable to changing times. However, its effectiveness is greatly influenced by the extent to which digital da'wah can internalize Islamic ethics in a complex virtual space. Based on this description, it can be understood

that the development of digital da'wah is a multidimensional phenomenon: it brings great opportunities to expand the reach of Islam, but at the same time poses serious challenges in terms of ethics, scientific authority, and communication politeness. Therefore, an in-depth academic study is needed to formulate a digital da'wah ethical framework that is based on sharia as well as contextual with contemporary digital culture. This study is important not only to prevent the misuse of da'wah as a popular commodity in the digital space but also to preserve the dignity of Islam as a religion of grace that teaches truth, promotes peace, and embodies universal humanity.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing a literature review method (*library research*) to analyze discourse on digital da'wah, social media, and Islamic communication (Kasir & Awali, 2024). The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meaning, concept, and social construction behind the phenomenon of digital da'wah. Additionally, the literature study method is considered relevant, as the research aims to integrate the normative perspective of Islam with contemporary realities and developments in communication technology (Mahmud, 2024). Research data sources are obtained from a variety of academic literature, including articles from reputable scientific journals, books, conference proceedings, institutional reports, and publications that directly discuss ethical issues, digital media, and contemporary da'wah practices. The selection of sources is carried out purposively, considering the quality, relevance, and novelty of the literature, to ensure the resulting analysis has academic validity.

Data analysis was carried out using a thematic approach. The stages of analysis include: (1) reading and organizing relevant literature, (2) coding the main ideas, (3) grouping the findings into key themes such as da'wah content transformation, technology integration in da'wah activities, digital competency development, ethical challenges, and risk mitigation strategies (Johariyah & Samsuddin, 2024). This thematic approach facilitates the identification of patterns, similarities, and differences between existing literature. In addition to thematic analysis, this study also adopts comparative analysis. This analysis was conducted by comparing the practice of digital da'wah, which is emerging in society, with the principles of Islamic ethics. In this way, the research can assess the extent to which existing digital da'wah practices align with Sharia values, as well as identify gaps that need to be bridged (Saleh et al., 2022).

To strengthen the findings, this study also highlights the importance of digital literacy as a crucial tool in instilling the ethics of technology users. This is because digital literacy is not only related to technical skills, but also encompasses an ethical dimension, namely the ability to use technology wisely, responsibly, and in accordance with Islamic principles (Hendayana et al., 2024). Thus, this study not only focuses on the challenges of digital da'wah but also offers a recommendatory framework on how digital literacy can be integrated into da'wah strategies so that Islamic messages are conveyed accurately, civilized, and relevant to the needs of the ummah. Through a combination of thematic and comparative approaches, this research aims to present a comprehensive conceptual framework for the development of practical and ethical digital da'wah. The research findings are expected to be a real contribution for dai, academics, and da'wah institutions in formulating Islamic communication strategies that are in line with technological developments, but still rooted in sharia principles (Wahid, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Da'wah is one of the fundamental activities in Islam, carried out by a da'i, to convey religious teachings, moral values, and the principles of Islamic life to the community. The form of da'wah can be diverse, ranging from verbal delivery to behavioral examples. Mahmud Yunus (2013) defines da'wah as "an effort to convey the teachings of Islam to others, with the aim that they understand and practice these teachings." This definition emphasizes the educational and transformational dimensions of da'wah, which extend beyond the delivery of information to change the attitudes and behaviors of people. The forms of da'wah in the Islamic tradition can be categorized into three: (1) *bil-oral da'wah*, which is da'wah delivered through speeches such as lectures, teachings, and discussions; (2) *da'wah bil-hal*, which is da'wah through real examples in daily deeds; and (3) *da'wah bil-kitab*, which is carried out through the writing of scientific works or religious literature (Aceh, 2015). This dimension emphasizes that da'wah is not a single practice, but a spectrum of communication activities that are adaptive to social and cultural contexts. The Qur'an emphasizes the obligation of da'wah as one of the pillars of Islam. In QS. Al-A'raf verse 181 states: "*And who is better to speak than one who calls upon Allah, does righteous deeds, and says: I am of those who surrender themselves to Allah.*" This verse shows that da'wah is not only a communication activity, but a form of devotion to Allah that is integrated with pious behavior. Thus, da'wah is a crucial instrument in shaping Islamic civilization, founded on faith, knowledge, and morals.

The development of information technology has significantly driven the transformation of da'wah methods. Da'wah is no longer limited to mosque pulpits or traditional recitation forums, but has penetrated the virtual space by utilizing digital platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Social media opens up new opportunities for Dai to reach a wider audience, especially the younger generation who are more active in the digital world. With its interactive and massive characteristics, social media can enhance the effectiveness of da'wah in disseminating Islamic values within a global society (Kasir & Awali, 2024). However, this phenomenon also raises new problems related to da'wah manners and ethics. Not a few preachers choose provocative communication styles, use harsh language, or deliver material without an adequate scientific foundation. Practices like this have the potential to cause misunderstandings about Islamic teachings, create polarization, and even worsen the image of da'wah itself. In other words, although digitalization expands the reach of da'wah, it also opens a gap for ethical deviations and a decrease in the quality of da'wah substance. The principles of Islamic da'wah emphasize the importance of conveying messages with *wisdom*, good advice, and polite dialogue, as emphasized in QS – an-Nahl verse 125. Da'wah is not a coercive activity, but rather an invitation in a persuasive manner – the principle of *la ikraha fi al-din* (there is no coercion in religion) in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 256 reinforces this concept. According to Sayyid Quthub, the principle of freedom of religion is a *kulliyah* (general principle) that is the foundation for the practice of da'wah. This confirms that guidance is the prerogative of Allah SWT, not the result of coercion by a dai. Thus, da'wah that is carried out with a humanist approach, full of respect, and that upholds religious freedom, is more in line with the spirit of Islam.

Table 1. Ethics and Challenges of Da'wah in the Digital Era

Main Themes	Description of Findings	Challenge	Recommendations
Da'wah Ethics	Ethics is the primary foundation for the success of da'wah. The case of Gus Miftah highlights the importance of maintaining a professional tone and respecting the audience without demeaning the profession or background.	Provocative, condescending, and a lack of politeness have the potential to damage the image of da'wah.	Strengthening ethical education for dai; Preparation of a digital da'wah code of ethics by official institutions.
Media Transformation	Social media (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok) has become the dominant medium in spreading Islamic messages. The younger generation more easily accepts audio-visual content.	Clickbait <i>trends</i> , provocative styles for popularity, and religious hoaxes.	Islamic digital literacy for dai; Creative content preparation, but still in accordance with sharia.
Persuasive Principles of Da'wah	The Qur'an (QS. An-Nahl:125, QS. Al-Baqarah: 256) emphasizes the	A rough/confrontational approach often leads to resistance and division.	Prioritizing two-way dialogue and using soft, persuasive language.

Main Themes	Description of Findings	Challenge	Recommendations
	importance of wisdom, polite dialogue, and non-coercion.		
The Strategy of the Prophet PBUH	The Prophet PBUH used the approach of gifts, correspondence, and appreciation of friends to build emotional relationships.	The lack of translation of the Prophet's method into the modern digital context.	Adaptation of the Prophet's method in the form of digital appreciation (appreciation, polite interaction on social media).
The Role of Da'wah Institutions	Organizations such as DDII play a crucial role in promoting the da'wah to adhere to the Qur'an and Sunnah.	There are still limited da'wah ethics coaching programs specifically for the digital space.	Da'wah institutions have created special training on "digital da'wah ethics" for speakers.

The phenomenon of preachers who ignore ethical principles is increasingly emerging in the digital era. One example of a case is an incident involving preacher Gus Miftah in Yogyakarta. In a study forum, he was considered to have demeaned an ice tea seller named Sunhaji with statements that were considered inappropriate. This content then went viral on social media, triggering a broad debate about the ethics of preaching. Many parties consider that these actions do not reflect the principles of Islamic da'wah, which emphasize politeness, respect for others, and respect for human dignity, regardless of profession. This case illustrates how a da'i's communication style can significantly impact the public's perception of da'wah and Islam. The act of degrading the profession of others, especially in the public sphere, not only hurts the individual concerned but can also reduce public trust in da'wah institutions. In the long run, this kind of practice has the potential to deter people from participating in religious activities due to fear or reluctance to get involved. From the description above, it is clear that strengthening da'wah ethics is an urgent need in the digital era. Da'wah must return to its fundamental principles, which are to invite with wisdom, gentleness, and real examples. Da's need to be equipped with a deep understanding of Islamic teachings, digital communication skills, and ethical awareness in order to convey religious messages constructively. In this context, the role of da'wah institutions, such as the Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Council (DDII), is vital, especially in providing training and guidance for the dai to adhere to the Qur'an and As-Sunnah, and to adapt to the challenges of the times without neglecting manners and ethics.

Discussion

Da'wah is the core of Islam's mission, which aims to convey divine teachings to humanity. It is not just a ceremonial activity, but a transcendental communication process that seeks to connect humans with the values of monotheism, morality, and sharia. In the classical Islamic tradition, scholars define da'wah as a task inherent in every Muslim.

Prof. Dr. H. Mahmud Yunus (2013) refers to da'wah as "an effort to convey the teachings of Islam to others, with the aim that they understand and practice these teachings." This definition emphasizes both functional and normative aspects: da'wah is both an instrument of delivery and a mission of religion. The Qur'an provides a strong basis for da'wah. In QS. Al-A'raf: 181 is mentioned: "*And who is better to speak than one who calls upon Allah, does righteous deeds, and says: 'Verily I am among those who surrender themselves to Allah.'*" This verse emphasizes the quality of da'wah: it must be done with good words, accompanied by real deeds, and based on sincerity. On the other hand, QS. Al-Baqarah: 256 affirms the principle of freedom: "*There is no coercion in religion.*" According to Sayyid Quthub, this verse is a universal principle (kulliyah rule) that rejects all forms of coercion. In other words, da'wah is persuasive communication, not coercive instruction. Ethics in da'wah is a crucial element that distinguishes between delivering constructive messages and communication that is actually counterproductive. These ethics include the use of polite language, an attitude of respect for the audience, and a solid scientific foundation. When ethical principles are disregarded, da'wah can become a tool of provocation. The case of Gus Miftah in Yogyakarta, for example, shows how demeaning remarks about the profession of ice tea sellers in the study room triggered widespread controversy. This incident demonstrates that mistakes in da'wah ethics not only harm individuals but also tarnish the image of da'wah itself.

The solution to this case must be structural and cultural. Personally, the speaker needs to apologize publicly. Institutionally, recitation organizers need to enforce ethical standards. Socially, pilgrims must be critical in choosing a dai who is not only fluent in speech but also has noble morals. Furthermore, da'wah ethics education needs to be strengthened in the training of dai so that they can internalize the principles of "hikmah, mau'izhah hasanah, and mujadalah billati hiya ahsan" (QS. An-Nahl: 125). The entry of Islam into the digital realm presents both great opportunities and complex challenges. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok enable da'wah to reach millions of people across various geographies in a matter of seconds. The format of da'wah has also become more varied, ranging from inspirational short videos to infographics and interactive podcasts. The younger generation, who are more closely connected to the digital world, are potential prime targets.

However, digital disruption also brings risks. Not a few days are tempted to use provocative styles for popularity and "virality", at the expense of substance and ethics. This *phenomenon of clickbait da'wah* often causes polarization, even division. This is where Islamic digital literacy is important, enabling individuals to use technology without being solely reliant on algorithmic logic, yet still grounded in Islamic principles. The Prophet

PBUH gave an example of a da'wah strategy that is gentle, full of wisdom, and contextual. In *Asaaliibu al-Rasul fi al-Dakwah wa al-Tarbiyyah* (Nurmaidah, 2021), it is stated that he used various approaches: gift-giving, correspondence with kings, and appreciation for outstanding friends. The principle of "*Tahadaw, tahabbuw*" (giving gifts to each other will foster love) shows that da'wah also builds emotional relationships, not just the transfer of information. In the digital context, these principles remain relevant. A gift can be seen as a symbolic appreciation for the audience, for example, by acknowledging their contribution or responding to a question with respect. The Prophet's correspondence can be paralleled with interactive communication on social media, characterized by politeness, clarity, and persuasiveness. The appreciation strategy can be applied by appreciating digital communities that actively discuss Islam.

CONCLUSION

This research emphasizes that da'wah, as an effort to convey Islamic teachings, must always be based on ethics, wisdom, and respect for the audience. The transformation of media from traditional da'wah to digital da'wah presents significant opportunities in reaching the wider community, especially the younger generation. However, it also poses serious challenges related to ethics, communication styles, and the validity of da'wah materials. The controversial case that occurred to some preachers shows that without strong ethics, da'wah has the potential to cause misunderstandings and even social divisions. The findings of this study also show that the da'wah strategies of the Prophet PBUH—such as giving appreciation, persuasive communication, and appreciation for individuals—remain relevant to be applied in the digital context. Therefore, modern da'wah must integrate classical Islamic principles with the use of technology in a creative, polite, and responsible manner. To face the challenges of the digital era, it is needed: (1) ethics education and digital literacy for preachers, (2) a persuasive and dialogical approach in conveying Islamic messages, (3) the use of social media with innovative and science-based content, and (4) the strategic role of da'wah institutions in fostering and supervising the quality of speakers. With these steps, da'wah can continue to be an instrument for spreading Islam that is rahmatan lil-'alamin, builds morality, and strengthens brotherhood and social harmony in the midst of changing times.

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