

Optimal Approaches for Proselytizing on Social Media: Collaboration, Content Oversight, and Digital Literacy

Taufik R. Talalu^{1,*}, Arifuddin Tike², Mahmuddin³, Aminulhaqim R. Talalu⁴

¹Department of Communication and Islamic Broadcasting, Faculty of Ushuluddin and Da'wah, IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo, Jl. Gelatik No.1 Gorontalo 96112, Indonesia.

²Master's Program in Communication and Islamic Broadcasting, Postgraduate Program, UIN Alauddin Makassar, Jl. H. M. Yasin Limpo No. 36 Gowa 92118, Indonesia.

³Department of Da'wah Management, Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, UIN Alauddin Makassar, Jl. H. M. Yasin Limpo No. 36 Gowa 92118, Indonesia.

⁴Department of Communication and Islamic Broadcasting, Faculty of Ushuluddin and Da'wah, IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo, Jl. Gelatik No.1 Gorontalo 96112, Indonesia.

Corresponding author*

trtalalu@iaingorontalo.ac.id

Abstract: Indonesia is a country with the largest Muslim population in Southeast Asia and a significant growth in internet users. This situation presents the potential for social media to become a vital communication channel in the practice of proselytization (da'wah). However, there are several gaps that could potentially arise. Firstly, not all da'wah content disseminated on social media can be guaranteed for its quality. Secondly, in the anonymous realm of the virtual world, social media can also become a platform for spreading messages of hatred. This article is written to provide a further explanation of various efforts to address these gaps. The discussion in this article is based on a literature review method and refers to the theory of participatory culture. The article's discourse is centered on three efforts: collaboration, oversight of da'wah content, and the enhancement of digital literacy.

Keywords: Collaboration, Da'wah, Digital Literacy, Social Media, Supervising Da'wah Content.

Introduction

Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population. Referring to "The Muslim 500" report by The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre (RISSC) in its 2023 edition, the Muslim population in this country reaches 237.55 million people or approximately 86.7% of the total population. This number makes Indonesia the country with the largest Muslim population in the Southeast Asian region and even globally. In Southeast Asia, following Indonesia, Malaysia ranks second with 19.84 million people, accounting for 61.3% of its total population, and the Philippines ranks third with 6.12 million people, constituting 5.57% of the country's population (Annur, 2023a).

As of early 2023, the number of internet users in Indonesia has reached 212.9 million. In this country, the user base for various social media

platforms is as follows: Instagram has 89.15 million users, TikTok has 109.9 million users, Facebook has 119.9 million users, and YouTube has 139 million users (Clinten, 2023; Haryanto, 2023). Globally, as of January 2023, the total number of social media users worldwide has reached 4.76 billion, equivalent to 59.4% of the current world population (Annur, 2023b). In January 2023, Facebook emerged as the social media platform with the highest number of active users worldwide, totaling 2.9 billion users. It was followed by YouTube with 2.2 billion users, while Instagram and WhatsApp both had a balanced number of active users, each reaching 2 billion users (Naurah, 2023).

In the context of Indonesia being the country with the largest Muslim population in Southeast Asia and the significant growth of internet users, researchers assume that social media can play a

crucial role in the practice of da'wah, or the dissemination of religious teachings. This assumption is grounded in various previous research findings regarding the use of social media as a communication channel for the spread of Islamic religious teachings (Hananto, 2021; Nugroho & Halwati, 2023; Nurfitriya & Arzam, 2022; Pamungkas & Halwati, 2023; Zulfikar, 2020). Therefore, social media can provide a wide opportunity for religious preachers (*mubaligh*) to convey religious messages to a broader and more effective audience.

Indeed, social media has made da'wah more accessible. With a large number of internet users in Indonesia, it means that the public has easy access to da'wah content that can be consumed anytime and anywhere through various channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. This enables the wide and rapid dissemination of religious messages, reaching a broader audience compared to traditional methods like delivering sermons in mosques.

Absolutely, social media also allows for direct interaction between preachers and their audience. With features such as comments and private messaging on social media platforms, the audience can engage with the preachers, ask questions, and share their thoughts. This facilitates a two-way dialogue between the preacher and their followers, which can deepen religious understanding and foster a sense of community and connection among those interested in the teachings.

Additionally, social media provides creative freedom in delivering da'wah messages. Preachers and evangelists can use videos, images, text, and various other engaging content formats to capture the audience's attention and convey religious messages in a more interesting and diverse manner. This allows preachers to tailor their content to the preferences and needs of a younger audience that is more accustomed to digital media formats. The versatility of social media enables a dynamic and visually appealing approach to da'wah, which can be highly effective in engaging and educating the audience.

While social media holds significant potential in da'wah, there are potential gaps that may arise. First, not all da'wah content disseminated on social

media can be assured of its quality. There is a plethora of unverified information and perspectives that do not always align with the true teachings of religion (Hanafi, 2022). This can potentially lead to the emergence of misunderstandings or misconceptions regarding religion.

Secondly, in the anonymous realm of the digital world, social media can also serve as a platform for spreading messages of hatred (Aji, 2022). Some individuals or groups may exploit social media to disseminate ideologies that run counter to the principles of tolerance and harmony that should be an integral part of Islamic da'wah.

Thirdly, despite the rapid growth of social media usage in da'wah, a significant portion of the population still lacks access (Setiawan, Pape, & Beschoner, 2022) or sufficient understanding of technology and social media. This creates a digital divide between those who can access da'wah through social media and those who cannot. Technologically marginalized communities may miss out on the benefits and accessibility offered by social media in the context of da'wah.

We assume that several efforts can be made to maximize the potential of social media in da'wah and address the existing gaps. Three of these efforts include collaboration or partnerships with various stakeholders, content supervision, and the enhancement of literacy. These three aspects will serve as the core topics of discussion in this article.

Materials and Methods

This article's discussion is based on the literature review method, a research approach that involves the collection and analysis of relevant literature on the targeted research topic. This method aims to compile and evaluate the existing knowledge on topics related to social media and da'wah, as well as identify research gaps that have yet to be addressed. It primarily focuses on the examination of written sources, such as academic journals, books, articles, and other publications.

Specific steps are employed to search for, gather, and organize pertinent literature. Firstly, the identification of keywords and search criteria

that align with the research topic is undertaken. Subsequently, literature is sought through academic databases, libraries, and other relevant sources. Once the literature is collected, researchers carefully read and review each source, noting important findings and identifying patterns or emerging themes.

This method enables researchers to grasp the latest developments and knowledge regarding social media in the context of da'wah, pinpoint vulnerabilities or gaps in previous research, and formulate more focused research questions. By amalgamating findings from various sources, this method aids in constructing a strong theoretical foundation for further research related to social media from da'wah perspective.

Results and Discussion

Social Media, Da'wah, and the Theory of Participatory Culture

Social media has become a widespread phenomenon in the current digital era. One theory related to social media is the theory of participatory culture as proposed by Henry Jenkins (Jenkins, 2006). This theory highlights the active role and participation of users in creating, sharing, and modifying media content. It emerged as a response to changes in media and digital technology. According to Jenkins, participatory culture is an environment where users act as producers, consumers, and active participants in creating media content. He emphasizes the importance of inclusive and collaborative participation, where individuals can interact, share, and modify existing media works.

The theory of participatory culture identifies several key characteristics of participatory environments, including low participation barriers, technological accessibility, openness to new ideas, a culture of sharing and collaboration, and recognition of individual contributions. Jenkins also highlights the role of social media platforms and digital technology in promoting participatory culture. Social media platforms like YouTube and other content-sharing platforms provide spaces for users to actively contribute, interact with other

users, and build online communities. This theory also underscores the importance of broader media literacy. Jenkins argues that users need to develop the skills to become critical and competent content producers, as well as actively participate in the evolving media culture.

Through the theory of participatory culture, we can understand how active and collaborative user participation impacts the dynamics of contemporary media culture. This theory emphasizes the shift from traditional one-way media models to models that allow for greater user contribution and participation in content creation and shaping media culture.

The theory of participatory culture emphasizes the importance of active user participation in creating, sharing, and modifying media content. In the context of da'wah, this theory encourages da'wah practitioners to actively involve their audience in the da'wah process. This can involve engaging the audience in discussions, sharing experiences, or contributing to the creation of relevant and engaging da'wah content. The theory also underscores the importance of openness to new ideas and inclusivity in a participatory environment. In the context of da'wah, this means that da'wah practitioners should be open to receiving various perspectives, thoughts, and experiences from their audience. This allows for more open dialogue and results in da'wah that is more responsive to the needs and challenges faced by the community.

The theory of participatory culture highlights the importance of developing broad media literacy skills. In the context of da'wah, this refers to the ability of da'wah practitioners to understand and effectively use media in conveying da'wah messages. This includes an understanding of social media, online marketing communication strategies, as well as skills in creating and modifying meaningful and engaging media content. Furthermore, the theory emphasizes the importance of collaboration and community building in a participatory environment. In the context of da'wah, collaboration can occur between da'wah practitioners and members of the community, as well as among da'wah practitioners themselves. This creates opportunities for mutual

support, sharing of knowledge and experiences, and strengthens da'wah effectiveness through collaborative efforts.

We believe that the theory of participatory culture can serve as a relevant framework in the context of da'wah. This approach can encourage active participation, openness, inclusivity, media literacy skill development, collaboration, and community building in da'wah efforts. By leveraging the principles of participatory culture, da'wah practitioners can expand the reach, effectiveness, and impact of their da'wah to a wider audience.

Collaboration: Society, Media, and Influencers

Collaboration with the local community is an effective strategy for addressing the gaps that arise in utilizing social media for da'wah. This involves working together with local groups, especially in areas that may have limited or no access to technology, to disseminate Islamic messages. Through such collaborations, da'wah practitioners can organize lectures, discussions, or other da'wah activities that involve direct interaction with the community. With this approach, they can reach an audience that may not have access or sufficient understanding of social media. Such collaborations also allow preachers to better understand the local context and the needs of the community, enabling them to deliver da'wah messages in a relevant and beneficial manner.

Collaboration with mainstream media and influencers is a crucial step in expanding the reach and impact of da'wah through social media. By working with mainstream media such as television, radio, or popular digital platforms, da'wah practitioners can have the opportunity to spread religious messages to a wider audience (Husain, 2020; Juniawati, 2014; Talalu, 2020). Through interviews, opinion columns, or special programs, they can share their knowledge and perspectives with an audience that may not be directly connected to da'wah content. Additionally, collaborating with social media influencers with a large following can be an effective means of reaching the younger generation (Hananto, 2021; Mazaya, 2022). These influencers can help convey

religious messages in an engaging and relevant way to their audience.

In collaborations with media and influencers, it is crucial to ensure that the da'wah messages conveyed remain consistent with the true teachings of religion and promote tolerance and peace. Da'wah practitioners need to maintain the integrity and authenticity of religious messages to prevent deviations or the spread of misconceptions. Therefore, it is essential to select media and influencer partners committed to principles of morality and ethics that align with religious teachings.

Collaboration with the local community, media, and influencers can complement each other. In collaborations with the local community, media and influencers can help spread information about da'wah activities conducted in the region. Conversely, through collaborations with the local community, da'wah practitioners can gain better access and recognition within local media and influencer networks, which may support the wider dissemination of da'wah messages. Collaboration can be part of a holistic and integrated strategy to strengthen da'wah practices through social media. By combining online and offline approaches and leveraging the power of both media and local communities, da'wah practitioners can reach a broader audience, embrace diverse communities, and have a greater positive impact in spreading religious messages.

Supervising Da'wah Content

Content supervision in da'wah is an essential step to ensure the dissemination of accurate religious messages that are consistent with the true teachings of the faith and promote tolerance and peace (Wibowo, 2018). In the era of free social media, strict control and supervision of da'wah content become increasingly crucial. Content supervision in da'wah can be carried out by religious institutions and related organizations. They can develop clear guidelines and standards for da'wah content disseminated through social media (Ridwan, Dulwahab, Rustandi, & Fatoni, 2021). These guidelines encompass aspects of the truth of religious teachings, communication ethics, and principles that promote tolerance, harmony,

and peace. With robust guidelines in place, the quality of disseminated da'wah messages can be ensured, aligning with the true principles of the religion.

The process of content supervision in da'wah also involves the verification and validation of the information conveyed. We believe that it is crucial for da'wah practitioners to refer to reliable and authoritative sources when creating their da'wah content. Quoting and citing valid sources can prevent the spread of misconceptions or misunderstandings about religious teachings. If there is inaccurate content or content that does not align with the religious teachings, supervision must be carried out to ensure that the content is corrected or not further disseminated.

Content supervision in da'wah also entails monitoring content disseminated by individuals or groups that may potentially propagate radical ideologies or extremism. Religious institutions and related organizations must collaborate with security authorities to identify and take action against content that violates the law, jeopardizes public safety, or contradicts the values of tolerance and peace. Content supervision in da'wah can also involve active participation from the community. The community can report suspicious or dubious content to religious authorities or relevant organizations. They can also take on the role of educating themselves about the true teachings of the faith, enabling them to detect content that does not align with these principles. With community participation, content supervision becomes more effective and responsive to the potential dissemination of harmful content.

It is also important to emphasize that content supervision in da'wah is not intended to restrict freedom of speech or freedom of religion. The primary goal of supervision is to uphold the integrity of religious messages, protect the community from the spread of misunderstandings, and promote values of goodness, tolerance, and peace. With proper supervision, social media can be effectively utilized as a means of disseminating beneficial da'wah messages that have a positive impact on society.

Strengthening Digital Literacy

The strengthening of digital literacy plays a crucial role in addressing the gaps in the use of social media for da'wah in Indonesia. Strengthening digital literacy provides a more equitable opportunity for all individuals to access, understand, and utilize social media as a means of da'wah (Tsaniyah & Juliana, 2019). By enhancing digital literacy, individuals from various backgrounds and educational levels can learn to use social media effectively, enabling them to participate in the dissemination of da'wah messages evenly.

Furthermore, digital literacy helps reduce disparities in access and technological understanding among the population. In the context of da'wah on social media, individuals with strong digital literacy will be better equipped to handle technical challenges associated with using social media platforms, such as creating engaging content, understanding algorithms, or analyzing data. Thus, strengthening digital literacy helps bridge the gap between those proficient in technology and those with limited understanding.

Strengthening digital literacy also contributes to the improvement of the quality of da'wah content disseminated through social media. Individuals with good digital literacy will be more capable of producing informative, relevant, and engaging da'wah content for their audiences. They can make use of various features and tools offered by social media platforms to enhance the appeal of their content, such as the use of images, videos, or infographics. Consequently, digital literacy enhances the quality of da'wah content and captures the interest of a broader audience.

Digital literacy helps prevent the dissemination of misleading or harmful content in da'wah on social media. With an understanding of information verification and critical assessment of encountered content, individuals with strong digital literacy can ensure that the da'wah messages they spread are accurate, aligned with religious teachings, and do not incite conflict or division. Digital literacy helps combat the spread of hoaxes, extremist content, or misconceptions about religion.

Moreover, the strengthening of digital literacy also activates active community participation in da'wah on social media. By enhancing digital literacy, individuals can be more confident and comfortable in interacting with social media platforms. They can express their opinions, exchange ideas, and engage in meaningful discussions in the online da'wah space. By actively involving the community, the strengthening of digital literacy plays a vital role in building an inclusive and empowered da'wah community.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this article has delved into three crucial aspects that can optimize the potential of social media in da'wah and address the associated gaps: collaboration with local communities, media, and influencers; content supervision; and the enhancement of digital literacy. Collaborating with various stakeholders, including local communities, media outlets, and social media influencers, can expand the reach and impact of da'wah efforts. Ensuring the supervision of da'wah content is essential to maintain its accuracy, alignment with religious teachings, and promotion of tolerance and peace. Finally, strengthening digital literacy empowers individuals to effectively use social media for da'wah, bridging technological disparities and enhancing the quality of content while actively engaging communities in the process. These strategies, when integrated holistically, have the potential to bolster the practice of da'wah through social media, reaching a wider audience and imparting positive religious messages.

References

- Aji, A. (2022). Kenapa Hate Speech Begitu Marak Terjadi di Internet? Retrieved from Universitas Gajah Mada website: <https://ugm.ac.id/id/berita/22681-kenapa-hate-speech-begitu-marak-terjadi-di-internet/>
- Annur, C. M. (2023a). Ini Jumlah Populasi Muslim di Kawasan ASEAN, Indonesia Terbanyak. Retrieved from Databoks Indonesia website: <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2023/03/28/i-ni-jumlah-populasi-muslim-di-kawasan-asean-indonesia-terbanyak#:~:text=Laporan The Royal Islamic Strategic,mencapai 237%2C55 juta jiwa.>
- Annur, C. M. (2023b). Jumlah Pengguna Media Sosial di Seluruh Dunia (Januari 2013 - Januari 2023). Retrieved from databoks website: <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2023/02/07/pertumbuhan-melambat-jumlah-pengguna-media-sosial-global-capai-476-miliar-hingga-awal-2023>
- Clinton, B. (2023). Pengguna Internet di Indonesia Tembus 212,9 Juta di Awal 2023. Retrieved from Kompas.com website: <https://tekno.kompas.com/read/2023/02/13/19300087/pengguna-internet-di-indonesia-tembus-212-9-juta-di-awal-2023?page=all>
- Hanafi, M. R. (2022). Konten-Konten Dakwah di Media Sosial Tidak Semuanya Benar? Retrieved from <https://kumparan.com/muhammad-ridhwan-hanafi-uinjkt/konten-konten-dakwah-di-media-sosial-tidak-semuanya-benar-1zOKwUMAlJ1>
- Hananto, P. M. (2021). Pemanfaatan Media Sosial untuk Berdakwah. *Jurnal Ushuluddin: Media Dialog Pemikiran Islam*, 23(2). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.24252/jumdpi.v23i2.23114>
- Haryanto, A. T. (2023). Jumlah Pengguna Internet RI Tembus 212,9 Juta di Awal 2023. Retrieved from detikInet website: <https://inet.detik.com/telecommunication/d-6582738/jumlah-pengguna-internet-ri-tembus-2129-juta-di-awal-2023#:~:text=Jumlah pengguna Instagram di Indonesia,di Indonesia mencapai 23 juta>
- Husain, A. (2020). Dakwah Islamiyah dan Tantangannya di Era Digital. *Al-Munqidz: Jurnal Kajian Dan Keislaman*, 8(1), 104–118. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.52802/amk.v8i1.190>
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. NYU Press.
- Juniawati, J. (2014). Dakwah Melalui Media Elektronik: Peran dan Potensi Media Elektronik dalam Dakwah Islam di Kalimantan Barat. *Jurnal Dakwah: Media Komunikasi Dan Dakwah*, 15(2), 211–233. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.14421/jd.2014.15201>
- Mazaya, V. (2022). Smart Dakwah di Era Society 5.0; Da'i Virtual dalam New Media. *Iqtida'*, 2(1). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.28918/iqtida.v2i01.5366>
- Naurah, N. (2023). Daftar Platform Media Sosial yang Paling Banyak Digunakan 2023, Facebook Juaranya. Retrieved from GoodStats website: <https://goodstats.id/article/daftar-platform-media-sosial-yang-paling-banyak-digunakan-2023-facebook-juaranya-BHY8q>
- Nugroho, A. R. B. P., & Halwati, U. (2023). Komunikasi Dakwah Islam pada Masyarakat Milenial di Era Globalisasi. *ICODEV: Indonesian Community Development*

- Journal*, 4(1), 33–45. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.24090/icodev.v4i1.8547>
- Nurfitriya, S., & Arzam, A. (2022). Urgensi Media Sosial Sebagai Sarana Dakwah Melalui Media. *An-Nida'*, 46(1), 85–105. Retrieved from <https://ejournal.uin-suska.ac.id/index.php/Anida/article/view/19245>
- Pamungkas, A., & Halwati, U. (2023). Tantangan Dakwah Melalui Media Sosial di Era Media Baru. *Arkana: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Media*, 2(1), 146–158. Retrieved from <https://ojs.unsiq.ac.id/index.php/arkana/article/view/4036>
- Ridwan, A., Dulwahab, E., Rustandi, R., & Fatoni, U. (2021). Dakwah Sejuk dan Peran Lembaga Penyiaran Dalam Mencegah Radikalisme. In *Bersiap Menghadapi ASO: Memastikan Konten Sehat dan Moderat*. Bandung: Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia Daerah Jawa Barat.
- Setiawan, I., Pape, U., & Beschorner, N. (2022). Bagaimana mengatasi ketidakmerataan akses internet di Indonesia. Retrieved from East Asia & Pacific on the Rise website: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/id/eastasiapacific/bagaiman-a-mengatasi-ketidakmerataan-akses-internet-di-indonesia>
- Talalu, T. R. (2020). Produksi Program Siaran Dakwah Radio. *Farabi*, 17(2), 147–162. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.30603/jf.v17i2.1858>
- Tsaniyah, N., & Juliana, K. A. (2019). Literasi Digital Sebagai Upaya Menangkal Hoaks di Era Disrupsi. *Al-Balagh : Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi*, 4(1).
- Wibowo, A. (2018). Kebebasan Berdakwah di Youtube: Suatu Analisis Pola Partisipasi Media. *Mawai'zh*, 9(2). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.32923/maw.v9i2.799>
- Zulfikar, Z. (2020). Pemanfaatan Media Sosial Dalam Berdakwah Pada Masa Covid-19 Di Aceh. *Syariah: Journal of Islamic Law*, 2(2), 138–154. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.22373/sy.v2i2.216>

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK