

Muslim Influencers and Moral Responsibility: An Ethical Analysis of Preaching on Digital Platforms

Najamudin¹, Dwi Muliati², Amelia Agustin³, Mansur Tennis⁴

¹ Universitas Ibn Khaldun Bogor, Indonesia; najamudin@uika.ac.id

² Universitas Ibn Khaldun Bogor, Indonesia; dwimuliati14@gmail.com

³ Universitas Ibn Khaldun Bogor, Indonesia, ameliaagustin38932@gmail.com,

⁴ Universitas Ibn Khaldun Bogor, Indonesia, mansurtennis62@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The development of digital media has given rise to a new phenomenon in dawah, namely the emergence of Muslim Influencers. This study aims to analyze the moral and ethical responsibilities of dawah that should be upheld by Muslim Influencers on digital platforms. The method used is qualitative with a library research approach, with data collected from various literature sources such as journals, books, and related academic works. The results of the study indicate that although the term "influencer" is not explicitly found in the Qur'an, its concept and responsibilities are implicitly reflected in QS. An-Nahl [16]: 125. Their presence has a significant influence on the mindset and behavior of society. However, dawah on social media also faces various challenges, such as inconsistent content, inadequate competence of preachers, and the risk of spreading unverified information. Therefore, this study concludes that The application of da'wah ethical values is very crucial. The main values that must be held include Sincerity and Truth (Sidiq), Patience, and Debate Ethics which are based on sincere intentions, clear goals, and the spirit of brotherhood in order to create a positive impact on the digital society.

Corresponding Author:

Najamudin

Universitas Ibn Khaldun Bogor, Indonesia; najamudin@uika.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology in the era of globalization has brought fundamental changes in various aspects of human life, including in the religious field (Noer Syo Im and Achmad Muhibin Zuhri 2024). The



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emergence of social media as a key product of the digital revolution is no longer merely a means of interpersonal communication, but has evolved into a new space for the massive production, distribution, and consumption of religious knowledge. Digital platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are able to transcend geographical and temporal boundaries, enabling social interactions to become more intense and rapid (Nasution 2020; Suhantoro et al. 2025). This condition directly impacts behavioral patterns, lifestyles, and even how people understand and practice religious teachings. This phenomenon has given rise to the concept of a network society, a society whose lives are heavily influenced by digital technology connectivity (Peralta et al. 2024). In this context, the source of religious authority no longer relies solely on traditional institutions such as Islamic boarding schools, religious study groups, or mosques, but also emerges from virtual spaces that are open, flexible, and dynamic.

This technology-based social transformation has also given rise to a new phenomenon in the world of Islamic preaching: digital da'wa. Social media has become a strategic medium for conveying Islamic messages to a wider audience, without the constraints of time and space. This situation is highly relevant to the characteristics of the millennial and Gen-Z generations, who are highly dependent on digital devices and the internet (Faisal and Mitra 2025). One of the key actors in this phenomenon is Muslim influencers, individuals with significant followings and the ability to influence public opinion through the digital content they produce. Muslim influencers convey religious messages through various creative formats, such as short videos, infographics of verses or hadiths, religious podcasts, and interactive online Q&A sessions. Their light, popular, and contextual communication style makes preaching feel closer to the everyday lives of their audiences, thereby increasing the appeal and effectiveness of conveying religious messages (Susanto and Syahrudin 2024).

However, despite the enormous potential of digital da'wah in expanding the reach of Islamic propagation, there are various problems and challenges that cannot be

ignored. One major issue is the commodification of religion, a process in which religious values are packaged in such a way as to pursue popularity, engagement, or even economic gain. This phenomenon has the potential to shift the orientation of da'wah from spiritual goals to pragmatic interests. Furthermore, the audience's low ability to verify the scientific chain of transmission or the validity of da'wah material also poses the risk of disseminating inaccurate information. This situation is further exacerbated by the emergence of instant da'wah (preachers) who enjoy high popularity but lack adequate scientific competence. As a result, the da'wah material delivered is vulnerable to being influenced by certain ideological interests or even deviating from the context of true Islamic teachings.

Another equally significant challenge is the public's low digital literacy in filtering religious information. Many social media users struggle to distinguish between authentic Islamic preaching content and narratives containing hoaxes, provocation, or hate speech. Differences in perspectives between preachers, openly displayed in digital spaces, often trigger horizontal conflict, especially when these differences are framed in polemics or unhealthy debates. If this phenomenon continues without strong ethical controls, social media has the potential to undermine social harmony and the value of tolerance in religious life. Therefore, the existence of digital Islamic preaching requires a solid ethical foundation to be effective not only in quantity but also in quality in substance.

Based on these conditions, the integration of religious and moral values in digital da'wah is a pressing need. Da'wah in the virtual space should not be solely oriented towards the number of followers or popularity, but must be grounded in moral responsibility as a mandate to convey the truth. Solid religious values must be the primary foundation for every Muslim influencer to maintain integrity in producing religious content. Good morals are a manifestation of true faith; thus, da'wah without morals will lose its spiritual essence. Principles such as honesty (*sidiq*), verification of information (*tabayyun*), politeness in communication, and tolerance of differences of opinion must be the primary guidelines in digital da'wah activities (Priyanti 2015).

From a theological perspective, the principle of da'wah has been explained in the Qur'an, especially in QS. An-Nahl verse 125, which emphasizes the importance of da'wah with wisdom, good advice, and polite dialogue (Mustofa 2016). This principle is particularly relevant in the context of social media, which is full of the dynamics of public communication. Muslim influencers serve not only as content creators but also as representative figures who reflect Islamic values in their daily lives. Therefore, consistency between the message conveyed and actual behavior is a crucial aspect in maintaining the credibility of da'wah and public trust in digital preachers.

The urgency of this research lies in the increasing influence of influencers in shaping public religious opinion, particularly among the younger generation who use social media as their primary source of information. Without an in-depth study of the moral and ethical responsibilities of digital da'wah, the influencer phenomenon has the potential to give rise to a crisis of religious authority, deviations in religious understanding, and social conflict based on differences in religious interpretation. Furthermore, research on digital da'wah has so far focused more on the communication or media aspects, while studies integrating theological, faith, and moral dimensions are still relatively limited. Therefore, research is needed that can provide a comprehensive and applicable conceptual framework for digital da'wah ethics.

The novelty of this research lies in its integration of the concepts of faith and morals as an ethical foundation for Muslim influencers in the context of digital da'wah. This research not only discusses the phenomenon of influencers as communication actors but also positions them as moral subjects with a spiritual responsibility in conveying religious teachings. This integrative approach yields a new perspective: the success of digital da'wah is measured not only by audience reach or content popularity, but also by the moral quality and impact of the resulting spiritual transformation. Thus, this research offers a conceptual model of digital da'wah ethics based on the integration of faith and morals, which can serve as a reference for da'wah

practitioners and academics in developing Islamic communication studies in the technological era.

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method with a library research approach (Creswell 2018). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply explore theological and ethical concepts related to the phenomenon of Muslim influencers in the digital space. Research data was collected from various authoritative literature sources, such as books on faith and morals, scientific journals on communication sociology, and academic works discussing digital da'wah and social media. The focus of data collection was directed at literature examining the ethics of Islamic communication, the problems of cyber da'wah, and the moral values that serve as standards of behavior for da'wah practitioners in the contemporary digital ecosystem. Data analysis was conducted descriptively and analytically through the stages of identification, classification, and interpretation of the collected data (Huberman and Jhonny 2014; Sugiyono 2015). Researchers used content analysis techniques to identify the relationship between classical da'wah principles, such as wisdom and good deeds, and the da'wah practices of influencers on social media. The interpretation process aimed to formulate an applicable ethical framework for digital da'wah, taking into account various empirical challenges, such as the crisis of religious authority and the commodification of religion. Through this approach, the research is expected to produce a conceptual synthesis regarding the moral responsibility of Muslim influencers, based on the integration of faith and moral values, thereby contributing to the creation of a dignified, civilized, and solution-oriented digital da'wah ecosystem for modern society.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The development of da'wah in the digital era demonstrates a transformation that is not only technological, but also epistemological and sociological. The presence of Muslim influencers as new actors in the virtual da'wah space has brought significant changes to patterns of religious authority, da'wah communication methods, and the relationship between preachers and audiences. While previously religious authority was more hierarchical and centered on formal institutions such as ulama, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), and religious institutions, in the digital context, this authority has become more fluid and open. Muslim influencers have emerged as figures who not only convey religious messages but also build religious identities that are contextualized within modern society.

This phenomenon demonstrates that digital da'wah is not merely a religious communication activity, but also a process of constructing social meaning that simultaneously involves theological, moral, and cultural aspects. Therefore, an analysis of the Muslim Influencer phenomenon cannot be separated from a study of religious authority, theological principles of da'wah, the integration of faith and moral values, ethical challenges in the digital space, and the role of da'wah in building social tolerance. Based on the results of the literature analysis, this study identified several key themes that illustrate the strategic role and moral challenges of Muslim Influencers in the digital da'wah ecosystem.

Table 1. Research Findings

No	Findings Theme	Description of Findings	Theoretical Implications	Practical Implications
1	Religious Authority and the Muslim Influencer	Religious authority is shifting from formal figures to popular figures in the digital	Strengthening the theory of shifting religious authority in digital society	Influencers need to have scientific competence and moral

	<p>Phenomenon space. Muslim (network society) influencers act as and contemporary bridges between da'wah communication. sacred religious texts and the realities of modern life through parasocial relationships with their audiences.</p>		<p>responsibility because of their position as public religious references.</p>
<p>2 Theological Analysis of Influencer Da'wah (QS. An-Nahl: 125)</p>	<p>The principles of influencer da'wah are in line with the three pillars of da'wah communication: hikmah (wisdom), mau'idzah hasanah (good advice), and mujadalah bil-lati hiya ahsan (polite dialogue).</p>	<p>Demonstrates the relevance of the teachings of the Qur'an to modern digital communication practices.</p>	<p>Influencers need to develop content that is educational, polite, and non-provocative even while following digital trends.</p>
<p>3 Integration of Faith and Morals as an Influencer's Code of Ethics</p>	<p>Consistency between digital imagery and lived reality is a major challenge. Faith serves as a moral compass to prevent the commodification of religion, while morals</p>	<p>Strengthening the concept of integration of faith and morals as the basis of Islamic communication ethics.</p>	<p>Influencers must apply the principles of sidiq, tabayyun, and amanah in every da'wah content.</p>

		serve as an indicator of the credibility of preaching.		
4	Ethical Challenges: Digital Radicalism and Polarity	Social media has become a potential space for the spread of radicalism and ideological conflict due to the low competence of preachers and the inconsistency of preaching material.	Strengthening the study of the risk of fragmentation of religious authority in the digital era.	Influencers need to present moderate, science-based content with clear references from Islamic scholars.
5	Building Digital Tolerance and Social Harmony	Muslim influencers have a strategic role in building tolerance through inclusive content, respecting differences in Islamic schools of thought, and fostering Islamic brotherhood.	Demonstrates the function of da'wah as an instrument of social engineering based on religious values.	Strong digital literacy and morals can create a peaceful and civilized da'wah ecosystem in the virtual space.

Discussion

Ethics of Preaching on Digital Platforms

The development of social media as a new space for da'wah practices presents complex dynamics, both in terms of opportunities and challenges. Empirically, social media enables the rapid and widespread dissemination of religious messages, but at the same time, it also gives rise to various issues related to authority, information

validity, and communication ethics. From the perspective of da'wah communication theory, the process of conveying religious messages depends not only on the content of the message, but also on the credibility of the communicator (source credibility) and the media context used (Allison et al. 2019). Therefore, the change in the medium of preaching from physical space to digital space automatically influences the communication structure and pattern of message reception by the audience.

One of the main problems in digital preaching is the fragmentation of religious authority. In Max Weber's theory of authority, legitimacy can stem from tradition, charisma, or rationality. In the context of social media, religious authority tends to shift toward popularity-based charismatic authority, where the number of followers, visual appearance, and rhetorical ability are more dominant than the depth of knowledge (Weber 2016). This situation allows anyone to become a preacher without going through a clear academic legitimacy process or a clear chain of knowledge. As a result, audiences are vulnerable to receiving information that is superficial or even deviates from authentic Islamic teachings. This phenomenon also aligns with the theory of the mediatization of religion, which explains that media has the power to reshape religious practices and authority according to its own logic.

Beyond the issue of authority, digital preaching also faces challenges in measuring the effectiveness of its messages. Unlike face-to-face preaching, which allows for direct observation of changes in congregation behavior, preaching on social media is often limited by quantitative indicators such as the number of likes, views, and shares. In persuasive communication theory, the success of a message is measured not only by the level of exposure but also by changes in attitudes and behavior (Solihin, Hasanah, and Fajrussalam 2020). Therefore, content popularity does not always reflect the substantial success of preaching. In fact, a focus on social media algorithms has the potential to encourage preachers to create sensational content to increase engagement, which could ultimately shift the spiritual value of preaching into a digital commodity.

The interactive and timeless characteristics of social media, as explained by Nasrullah, also pose a challenge. Social media allows for open dialogue between groups with diverse ideological backgrounds, but without strong communication ethics, this can trigger conflict and polarization. The filter bubble phenomenon exacerbates this problem, as users tend to be exposed only to views that align with their preferences. From the perspective of the spiral of silence theory, this can reinforce group exclusivism and close off healthy dialogue between schools of thought or opinions (Yahuda et al. 2024). As a result, social media, which should be a space for education, has the potential to become an arena for ideological conflict. To address these problems, an ethical framework for digital da'wah is needed, based on Islamic communication principles. The concepts of qaulan sadidan, qaulan layyinan, and qaulan ma'rufan in the Qur'an provide a normative basis for correct and polite da'wah communication. Qaulan sadidan emphasizes the importance of the truth and validity of information, which in the digital context can be realized through a process of tabayyun (verification) before disseminating content. This aligns with the theory of communication ethics, which emphasizes the communicator's moral responsibility for the impact of the message conveyed. Digital preachers are not only responsible to their audience, but also to the true values of the religion they represent.

Meanwhile, Qaulan Layyinan emphasizes the importance of gentle language and polite communication. In the context of social media, which is rife with debate and negative comments, this principle becomes highly relevant in preventing hate speech and social conflict. In interpersonal communication theory, the use of empathetic and polite language can increase message acceptance and reduce audience resistance. Thus, a gentle communication approach has not only theological value but also psychological effectiveness in influencing behavior. In addition to the ethical aspects of communication, the competence and integrity of the preacher are also important factors in digital preaching. The theory of communicator credibility explains that audience trust is influenced by expertise and

trustworthiness (Amalia, Bulutoding, and Sumarlin 2024). Preachers with deep knowledge and moral integrity will be more readily accepted by the public than figures who rely solely on popularity. Therefore, strengthening their scholarly capacity and consulting with religious scholars is a fundamental requirement for Muslim influencers to ensure their preaching is neither superficial nor misleading.

Another equally important aspect is digital literacy, for both preachers and audiences. Digital literacy relates not only to the technical ability to use technology, but also to the critical ability to understand, evaluate, and produce information responsibly. From an Islamic educational perspective, digital literacy can be positioned as part of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, a collective effort to spread good and prevent evil in the digital public sphere. Preachers with high digital literacy will be able to understand the mechanisms of social media algorithms and avoid getting caught up in trends that conflict with religious values. Conversely, audiences with digital literacy will be more selective in receiving information and will not be easily provoked by misleading content.

Thus, the integration of Islamic communication ethics and digital literacy is key to building a healthy digital da'wah ecosystem. Da'wah on social media must be returned to its primary purpose as a means of social transformation that brings peace, not simply as a digital commodity that triggers unrest. An approach that combines religious values, morals, scientific competence, and digital intelligence will be able to create a da'wah space that is not only effective communicatively, but also spiritually and socially meaningful. Ultimately, the success of digital da'wah is not measured by the virality of the content, but by changes in people's behavior toward a more civilized, tolerant, and godly lifestyle.

Ethical Values of Muslim Influencers' Da'wah on Digital Platforms

The development of digital communication technology has fundamentally changed the structure of human social interaction, including the practice of spreading religious teachings. Social media is no longer simply a communication tool, but has become a space for the production of social meaning that influences the

formation of identity, public opinion, and even people's religious orientations. From the perspective of the mediatization of religion theory, media has the ability to reshape religious practices according to the logic of technology and popular culture (Najamudin and Anwar 2024b). This situation has led to a transformation of da'wah from a traditional model based on institutional authority to a new, more personal, visual, and interactive model, fostered by Muslim influencers. However, this change is not always accompanied by moral maturity and digital literacy. The phenomenon of free expression in the digital space often encourages individuals to ignore ethical standards in pursuit of instant popularity (Najamudin and Hidayat 2025). In the context of da'wah, this is crucial because every religious message delivered leaves a permanent digital footprint and has a far-reaching impact on society. Therefore, a strong foundation of ethical values is necessary so that digital da'wah is not only effective in communication but also spiritually valuable and morally dignified.

The first and most fundamental value is sincerity and truth (*al-ikhlas wa ash-shidqu*). From the perspective of the psychology of da'wah, intention is the primary factor determining the quality of one's deeds. The biggest challenge for Muslim influencers is the popularity trap created by social media algorithms, such as the number of followers, likes, and positive comments. This system can give rise to mental illnesses such as *riya'* (showing off) and *ujub* (showing off), namely the tendency to display oneself for social approval (Najamudin and Anwar 2024a). Al-Ghazali explains that the love of popularity (*hubb al-jah*) is a very subtle heart disease and is often not realized (Al-Ghazali 2004). In a digital context, this condition can be seen when an influencer feels that he is the most correct or uses religion as a means of building a personal image.

Sincerity must go hand in hand with the principle of truth (*sidiq*). In the theory of communication ethics, honesty is the primary foundation of a communicator's credibility. Muslim influencers are required to convey content based on valid sources, whether the Quran, hadith, or the opinions of authoritative scholars. The practice of manipulating information or disseminating content without verification

to increase engagement contradicts the moral principles of da'wah. Furthermore, the concept of tabayyun in Islam has strong relevance to modern information literacy theory, namely the process of verification before disseminating information to the public (Al-Ghazali 2004). Thus, intellectual integrity is a primary requirement for maintaining the quality of digital preaching. The second value is patience and digital resilience (ash-sabr). Social media is characterized by the high speed of information, which often triggers spontaneous reactions without thorough consideration. In online communication theory, this phenomenon is known as the online disinhibition effect, which is the tendency for individuals to be more reactive in the digital space than in the real world. Therefore, patience is a crucial moral bulwark for a preacher. Hamka emphasized that patience is a spiritual strength capable of maintaining one's emotional stability in facing social challenges.

In the context of digital preaching, patience encompasses the ability to restrain oneself from impulsive comments, maintain one's dignity in the public spotlight, and handle criticism or digital attacks with wisdom. Challenges such as cyberbullying, slander, and speculative information require strong psychological resilience. Preachers who maintain patience will be more respected by their audiences because they demonstrate emotional maturity and moral integrity. Conversely, excessive emotional reactions can actually damage the credibility of the preaching itself. The third value is the ethics of mujadalah (debate) based on the spirit of brotherhood (ukhuwah) (Mayasaroh and Bakhtiar 2020; Susanto et al. 2023). Social media often becomes a space for open debate that has the potential to trigger ideological conflict. In conflict communication theory, differences of opinion can be constructive when managed with respect and the goal of finding solutions, but they can become destructive when driven by ego and the desire to win. Islam provides clear guidance through the concept of mujadalah bi-lati hiya ahsan, namely dialogue in the best way.

The ethics of mujadalah require three main principles. First, a sincere intention in discussions to seek the truth, not to win the debate. Second, the use of strong

arguments based on knowledge, so that discussions remain intellectual, not emotional. Third, maintaining a spirit of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), both among Muslims and those of different faiths. Yusuf al-Qaradawi emphasized that the ultimate goal of *da'wah* communication is to create social harmony, not escalate conflict. Therefore, tolerance and respect for differences are indicators of the success of digital *da'wah* ethics.

The integration of these three values—sincerity and truth, digital patience, and the ethics of *mujadalah*—demonstrates that Muslim influencers serve not only as content creators but also as moral agents in the digital public sphere. From the perspective of social role theory, individuals with significant influence over society have a greater moral responsibility. Therefore, Muslim influencers must recognize that their *da'wah* activities are not merely social communication but also a spiritual mandate with consequences in this world and the hereafter. By internalizing these ethical values, digital *da'wah* can serve as a means of social transformation, bringing peace and enlightenment. The success of *da'wah* is not measured by the virality of the content, but by changes in societal attitudes and behavior toward a more civilized, tolerant, and divinely-based lifestyle. Ultimately, the ethics of digital *da'wah* are key to maintaining the sanctity of religious messages amidst the ever-evolving flow of modern technology.

4. CONCLUSION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes in the practice of Islamic *da'wah* through the emergence of Muslim influencers on various social media platforms. This phenomenon indicates a shift in religious authority from a traditional, institution-based model to a more personal and popular model, where digital figures have a significant influence in shaping the religious understanding of society, especially among millennials and Gen-Z. While this presents significant opportunities for expanding the reach of *da'wah*, it also presents serious challenges, such as the commodification of religion, the fragmentation of

scholarly authority, low digital literacy, and the potential for ideological conflict in the virtual space. This research confirms that the success of digital da'wah depends not only on communication skills and popularity, but is largely determined by the integration of religious and moral values as a moral foundation. Ethical principles such as sincerity (ikhlas), honesty (sidiq), patience (sabr), and the ethics of polite dialogue (mujadalah bil-lati hiya ahsan) serve as key guidelines in maintaining the credibility of da'wah on social media. Muslim influencers play a role not only as communicators but also as representatives of Islamic values capable of building tolerance and social harmony. This research provides a contribution in the form of a digital da'wah ethics model based on the integration of faith and morals, so that it is hoped that digital da'wah can produce positive spiritual and social transformation and be in line with the mission of Islam as rahmatan lil 'alamin.

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