# Living Islam in the Modern World: Examining *Digital Da'wah* in Indonesia from the Perspective of Fisher and Rinehart's *Living Religions*

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Abstract:

This study examines the phenomenon of *digital da'wah* in Indonesia using the theoretical framework of Fisher and Rinehart's *Living Religions*. The research applies a qualitative method through online observations and literature reviews. The findings reveal that *digital da'wah* has successfully created new spaces for the dissemination of Islam by adopting a more inclusive approach and adapting to technological advancements. Contrary to previous assumptions that Islam would lag behind modernity, this study demonstrates that Islamic preaching in the digital world enriches perspectives on religious teachings and enables Islamic messages to reach diverse audiences, particularly younger generations. However, this study also highlights the challenges that arise due to the lack of caution in delivering *da'wah* content, which can lead to controversy in the digital sphere. This research contributes to the development of a *digital da'wah* concept that responds to contemporary changes and emphasizes the importance of ethics in spreading religious messages online. Furthermore, it provides new insights into how Islamic *da'wah* can persist and evolve in the digital era without losing its core teachings.

*Keywords*: *digital da'wah*, modern Islam, *Living Religions*, religious transformation, ethics of *da'wah*.

*Abstrak:*

*Penelitian ini mengkaji fenomena da'wah digital di Indonesia dengan menggunakan kerangka teori Living Religions karya Fisher dan Rinehart. Penelitian ini menerapkan metode kualitatif melalui observasi daring dan tinjauan pustaka. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa da'wah digital telah berhasil menciptakan ruang baru untuk penyebaran Islam dengan mengadopsi pendekatan yang lebih inklusif dan beradaptasi dengan kemajuan teknologi. Bertentangan dengan asumsi sebelumnya yang menyatakan bahwa Islam akan tertinggal dalam menghadapi modernitas, penelitian ini menunjukkan*

*bahwa dakwah Islam di dunia digital memperkaya perspektif ajaran agama dan memungkinkan pesan-pesan Islam menjangkau beragam audiens, terutama generasi muda. Namun, penelitian ini juga menyoroti tantangan yang muncul akibat kurangnya kehati-hatian dalam menyampaikan konten da'wah, yang dapat menyebabkan kontroversi di ranah digital. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan konsep da'wah digital yang merespons perubahan kontemporer dan menekankan pentingnya etika dalam menyebarkan pesan agama secara daring. Selain itu, penelitian ini memberikan wawasan baru mengenai bagaimana dakwah Islam dapat bertahan dan berkembang di era digital tanpa kehilangan ajaran pokoknya.*

***Kata Kunci:*** *da'wah digital, Islam modern, Living Religions, transformasi agama, etika da'wah.*

## INTRODUCTION

The rise of digital technology has profoundly transformed social interactions, including religious practices. In Indonesia, home to approximately 245.97 million Muslims (87.08% of the population), *digital da'wah* has become a central phenomenon. Social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok now serve as primary channels for disseminating Islamic teachings. For instance, there are over 10,000 active YouTube channels dedicated to Islamic content, and Instagram hosts millions of posts with hashtags like #IslamicQuotes and #IslamicTeachings. These platforms enable preachers to reach diverse audiences across geographical and demographic boundaries.

While offering opportunities, this shift also presents challenges. One major issue is the risk of spreading misinformation or oversimplifying Islamic teachings, given the limited space for in-depth discussion on social media. Additionally, controversies surrounding *da'wah* attitudes and narratives cause unrest on these platforms. This phenomenon reflects the tension between the ideal of conveying Islamic teachings gracefully and the reality of adapting to digital trends and audience preferences. Understanding how *digital da'wah* operates and its implications is crucial to addressing these pressing issues.

Previous studies have explored the role of digital media in Islamic discourse, often focusing on its effectiveness or limitations. For example, Qudratullah and Syam (2024) highlighted the transformation of *da'wah* through digital spaces, which allows for broader dissemination of Islamic messages but poses challenges in maintaining traditional values. Another study by Naamy (2023) discussed the relationship between *da'wah* in new media and religious authority in Indonesia, showing how digital platforms influence the legitimacy and authority of preachers.

Sumiati and Nawawi (2024) focused on the role of communities like NU Garis Lucu, AISNU, and Pondok Sanad in attracting young generations through creative *da'wah* approaches. Sikumbang et al. (2024) explored theological discourse in the context of *digital da'wah* in Indonesia, highlighting how scholars use digital platforms to convey theological messages. Wahid (2024) conducted a bibliometric analysis exploring the intersection between Islam and digital technology, revealing research trends in this field. Sholihah (2023) highlighted how the Instagram account @taqy_malik uniquely delivers da'wah messages through a semi-formal approach. Salam et al. (2024) identified challenges in *da'wah* research by studying *da'wah* models in the context of Qur'anic guidance and social change, revealing the importance of understanding the social context in *da'wah* delivery.

However, most of these studies do not utilize the *"Living Religions"* framework by Fisher and Rinehart, which emphasizes the dynamic and evolving nature of religious practices. This research fills that gap by examining *digital da'wah* not only as a mode of communication but also as a reflection of the broader evolution of Islam in the modern world. This study also contributes to understanding how digital platforms create new landscapes for religious practices, both in terms of adaptation and resistance to change.

This study aims to examine the phenomenon of *digital da'wah* in Indonesia, primarily using the theoretical framework of *"Living Religions"* by Fisher and Rinehart. It seeks to uncover how digital platforms are used for *da'wah*, the strategies employed, and the controversies in disseminating Islamic teachings.

This research argues that *digital da'wah* manifests Islam's ability to adapt to the modern world. Fisher and Rinehart (2017), in their book *"Living Religions,"* state that religion has a remarkable capacity

to adapt swiftly to modernity. A world once predicted to become the "enemy of religion" has instead become the new ground for religiosity. Rather than leading believers to secularism, modernity facilitates individuals in affirming their faith with technology that supports ease of life.

Although modernity brings many changes to religious order, often resulting in the diminishing role of religion, it encourages the growth and adaptation of religion itself to remain relevant. The fact that religion, though often considered irrational in this modern era, remains alive and thrives in the digital age demonstrates its flexibility. In the context of Islamic *da'wah* in Indonesia, this is evident from how *digital da'wah* has rapidly developed and become massive through various digital platforms, reflecting the continuity of Islamic tradition alongside innovation in its dissemination.

## METHOD

This study examines *digital da'wah* platforms active in Indonesia, including YouTube, Instagram, X, and TikTok. The cases observed involve *da'wah* content from popular accounts such as Hanan Attaki, Abdul Somad, Ja'far Husein, Oki Setiana Dewi, and *NU Garis Lucu.* This research focuses on the digital space, particularly user interactions with *da'wah* content, including comments and distribution patterns.

This study employs a qualitative approach using both primary and secondary data. The primary data comes from online observations on digital platforms (Hine, 2020). The secondary data consists of relevant literature, including the book *Living Religions* by Fisher and Rinehart (2017), journal articles, and statistical reports on social media usage in Indonesia.

The research follows several stages. In the first stage, the study conducts online observations to identify *da'wah* delivery patterns and audience responses. In the second stage, the study performs content analysis to understand the key messages in *digital da'wah*, including texts, images, and videos.

The study analyzes the collected data through several steps (Miles & Huberman, 2013). First, the study reduces the data to filter relevant information. Next, we organize the selected data according to key themes, such as Islam's adaptation patterns in the digital era and the challenges of message delivery. Finally, the study links the findings to Fisher and Rinehart's theoretical framework to highlight the transformation of religion in the context of modernity.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Digital *Da'wah* in Indonesia

Digital *da'wah* in Indonesia has become one of the main phenomena in modern religious practices. According to a report from We Are Social, Indonesia's population at the beginning of 2024 reached 278.7 million people, with 185 million of them being internet users. The internet penetration rate of 73.7% of the total population indicates that the majority of Indonesians are connected to the digital world (Riyanto, 2024). Among them, 139 million people are social media users, which is equivalent to 50% of the total population (Annur, 2024a). Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have become the primary media for disseminating Islamic *da'wah*.

Data shows that YouTube has 139 million users in Indonesia, with an advertising reach equal to 50% of the total population. Meanwhile, Instagram has 99.15 million users, and TikTok has 92.07 million users aged 18 and above. This phenomenon illustrates how social media has become an extremely effective tool for reaching the public, especially young people. This is further reinforced by the fact that 52.3% of Instagram users in Indonesia are women, while 47.7% are men, indicating equal access to digital platforms (Annur, 2024b).

Beyond these statistics, social media has provided a platform for young *da'i* (Islamic preachers) to deliver religious messages creatively and interactively (Sikumbang et al., 2024). For example, *Ustaz* Hanan Attaki uses media such as Instagram and YouTube to spread his *da'wah*. With a relaxed delivery style that resonates with young people, *Ustaz* Hanan has successfully captured the attention of millions, particularly youth, in the process of religious transformation (*hijrah*). His content, which includes inspirational stories, motivational videos, and short sermons presented in a contemporary style, has become a major attraction (Setia & Dilawati, 2021).

**Figure 1.** Hanan Attaki's YouTube Channel
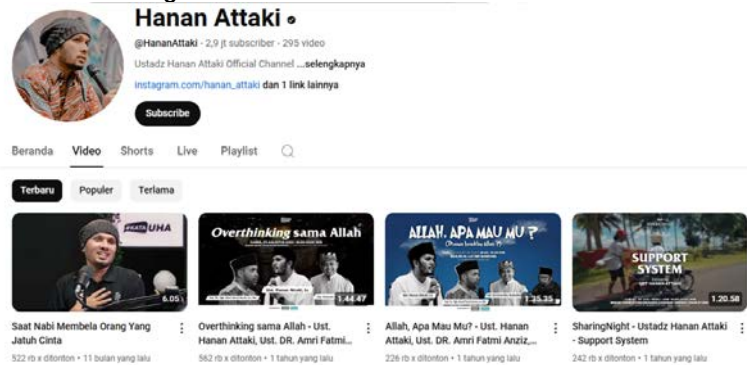


**Source:** YouTube Hanan Attaki, 2024.

Similarly, *Habib* Husein Ja'far Al Hadar is another *da'i* who effectively utilizes digital media to spread Islam with a fresh and moderate approach (Ervinda, 2023). With a large following on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, *Habib* Husein reaches a broader audience, including those who may feel disconnected from conventional *da'wah* methods. Additionally, his humorous yet insightful approach makes his *da'wah* relevant and well-received across different segments of society.

**Figure 2.** Jeda Nulis YouTube Channel by Habib Ja'far



**Source:** YouTube Jeda Nulis, 2024.

Digital *da'wah* has also provided a space for communities to grow. Accounts like NU Garis Lucu (@nugarislucu) illustrate how traditional Islamic communities have adapted to the digital world (Sumiati & Nawawi, 2024). This account uses humor as its primary medium for conveying religious messages, attracting audiences who might find conventional *da'wah* too formal or inaccessible. Through this approach, NU Garis Lucu has successfully created an inclusive and engaging discussion space while promoting a gentle and tolerant interpretation of Islam.

**Figure 3.** NU Garis Lucu Instagram Account



**Source:** Instagram @nugarislucu, 2024.

These examples demonstrate that digital *da'wah* fosters greater inclusivity, reaching audiences across geographic and demographic boundaries. Additionally, creative content such as short videos, humorous communication, infographics, and live broadcasts enhance its appeal to the younger generation, who are highly engaged with digital media. These findings show that digital *da'wah* functions not only as a communication tool but also as a reflection of Islam's adaptation to the modern world.

According to Dawam Multazamy, a prominent Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) figure, NU Garis Lucu aims to deliver religious messages in a relaxed manner. He stated, "The NU Garis Lucu admin wants to showcase humor in the style of Gus Dur amidst the rigidity of inter-Muslim communication or interactions with other religions. All groups easily accept this humor-laden narrative. People respond more positively to humor and comedy. In the religious context, humor can also be well received." The presence of NU Garis Lucu has inspired similar accounts, such as *Muhammadiyah Garis Lucu*, *Gontor Garis Lucu*, *LDII Garis Lucu*, and even *HTI Garis Lucu*. The last account, however, does not support the *Khilafah* (caliphate) but instead critiques the idea humorously. There are even accounts like *Katolik Garis Lucu*, *Protestan Garis Lucu*, and others (NF & Setiawan, 2019).

Beyond entertainment, digital *da'wah* has shown its potential to address contemporary challenges. In this context, digital *da'wah* serves not only as a new medium for religious dissemination but also as a means to maintain Islam's relevance in modern society (Setia & Iqbal, 2021). By leveraging digital technology, *da'wah* continues to evolve, providing space for innovation without losing the essence of Islamic teachings.

For instance, *Ustaz* Abdul Somad, one of the most renowned *da'i*, also utilizes social media to spread religious messages (Triantoro, 2019). With millions of followers on platforms like Facebook and YouTube, *Ustaz* Abdul Somad reaches audiences from diverse backgrounds. His in-depth sermons, grounded in various Islamic disciplines, have become valuable sources of knowledge for many. This demonstrates that digital media is not merely a tool but an essential medium for preserving and disseminating Islamic teachings.

**Figure 4.** Ustaz Abdul Somad's YouTube Channel



**Source:** YouTube Ustadz Abdul Somad, 2024.

The prominence of influential *dai* and major social media accounts, such as Hanan Attaki, Abdul Somad, *Habib* Ja'far, and NU Garis Lucu, is facilitated by Indonesia's high internet usage. The GSMA Intelligence report shows that Indonesia has 370.1 million mobile connections, which is equivalent to 133.3% of the total population (Annur, 2024a). This figure reflects that most Indonesians have more than one digital connection, significantly expanding the potential reach of *da'wah* messages via social media.

Notably, female *da'i* have also gained popularity due to social media. One prominent figure is Oki Setiana Dewi. She first gained recognition among Indonesian Muslims for her outstanding acting in the film *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih*. However, she has since become a respected *ustazah*, frequently giving lectures on television and various platforms, which are later uploaded on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok (Febriati, 2023). Her massive social media following has established her as one of Indonesia's leading preachers, especially in topics related to women's issues.

**Figure 5.** Oki Setiana Dewi's Instagram Account
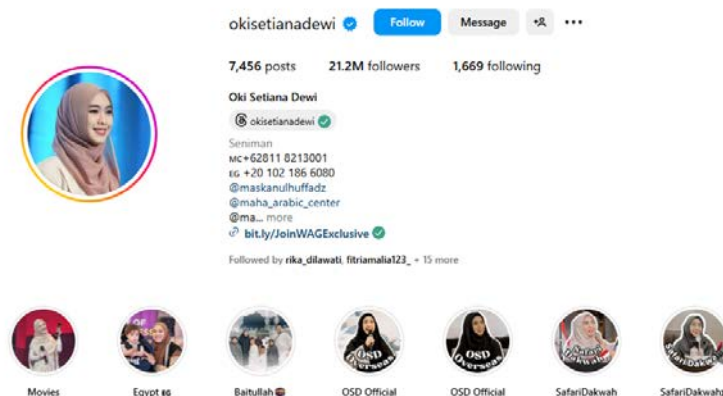


**Source:** Instagram @okisetianadewi, 2024.

In conclusion, digital *da'wah* has emerged as the primary platform for Muslims, particularly preachers, to spread religious messages in more creative and effective ways (Osho, 2019). Amid the dominance of Western and Korean cultural trends in the digital space, Islamic *da'wah* has found its path to growth and wider audience engagement (Mohamad, 2024; Mutiara, 2023). The use of social media platforms such as *YouTube, Instagram, TikTok,* and *Facebook* not only provides easy access for preachers but also accelerates the dissemination of religious messages in a more engaging and relevant format.

Examples of preachers who utilize social media, such as *Ustaz* Hanan Attaki, *Habib* Husein Ja'far Al Hadar, and *Ustaz* Abdul Somad, demonstrate that preaching is no longer confined to pulpits, mosques, or schools but has significantly shifted into the digital space. These preachers have successfully reached a broader audience by adopting approaches that align with the digital lifestyle of today's society. This illustrates the immense potential of digital preaching in addressing spiritual needs without diminishing the essence of Islamic teachings (*Goh,* 2025).

Thus, digital *da'wah* has transformed the way Muslims convey religious messages, marking a significant shift in religious practices in the modern era (*Mutia,* 2022). Social media has become a highly effective tool for engaging the community, introducing Islamic teachings more lightly and appealingly, and creating an inclusive space that reaches diverse groups (*Saat & Burhani,* 2020). With the continuous growth of internet and social media users in Indonesia, digital preaching is expected to play a crucial role in strengthening religious understanding within society while responding to contemporary challenges in a more relevant and adaptive way (*Fakhruroji,* 2019).

### Adaptation of *Da'wah* through Digital Platforms

The success of Islamic *da'wah* in the digital world results from the adaptations made by *da'wah* actors in managing ongoing developments. This adaptation is necessary when preachers enter the digital realm, which prioritizes a vast and diverse market. Preachers like Hanan Attaki and Habib Ja'far cannot rely on traditional methods, particularly the conventional one-way sermon delivered from a pulpit. Instead, they have transformed their approach using various effective strategies, successfully reaching a broad audience in society (Hall, 2022). Ultimately, their large following, especially among internet users (millennials and Gen Z), is a natural outcome of their successful efforts in spreading Islam through digital platforms (Aditoni & Rohmah, 2022).

The following are examples of adaptation strategies used by renowned preachers in digital media, employing creative approaches. First, Hanan Attaki challenges traditional methods of spreading religion. He wears trendy, modern clothing, avoiding the conventional appearance of religious scholars. Additionally, his soft and relaxed delivery makes audiences, particularly teenagers and congregants, feel connected to him. Hanan frequently discusses popular youth topics, such as love, brotherhood, heartbreak, and sadness, in a manner that is easy to understand. As a result, he has gained a large following on social media. His approach starkly contrasts with the traditional preaching methods of earlier

scholars, who typically wore Islamic attire such as robes and *peci* caps and spoke in formal religious language that many found difficult to grasp.

**Figure 6.** Example of Hanan Attaki's da'wah themes using colloquial language



*Source: Instagram @hanan_attaki, 2024.*

The image above illustrates how Hanan Attaki appeals to young Muslim audiences by offering themes closely related to their lives. For example, the theme *"Gagal Move On"* (Failing to Move On) reflects common youth experiences in romantic relationships. He repackages such phrases into sermon topics, making his content more relatable to young audiences. This relatability serves as a primary attraction in his da'wah. Moreover, he is known for popularizing the *hijrah* movement in Bandung, West Java. This *hijrah* movement refers to the behavioral transformation from negativity to positivity. Many teenagers and young adults in the city have embraced this movement, demonstrating how digital *da'wah* significantly expands audience reach.

Second, *Habib* Ja'far. This unconventional preacher, originally from Madura, East Java, completed his education at UIN Jakarta. He is known as a moderate preacher due to his social media content focusing on tolerance, unity, religious moderation, and interfaith dialogue (Celesta, 2022). His approach represents a groundbreaking shift in Islamic *da'wah* in Indonesia, as interfaith dialogue was previously considered taboo in religious activities and was often avoided. However, *Habib* Ja'far has successfully brought interfaith discussions into the digital realm, making them a common topic of discussion on social media.

**Figure 7.** Habib Ja'far's YouTube content on tolerance



*Source: YouTube Deddy Corbuzier, 2024.*

The image above showcases two viral examples of *Habib* Ja'far's content. In one of the featured videos, he sits alongside six religious leaders in a podcast titled "LOGIN" on Deddy Corbuzier's YouTube channel. The video, titled "LOE LIAT NIH LOGIN!! INI INDONESIA BUNG!! 6 PEMUKA AGAMA JADI SATU DI

LEBARAN!! – JA'FAR" ("LOOK AT THIS LOGIN!! THIS IS INDONESIA, MAN!! 6 RELIGIOUS LEADERS COMING TOGETHER FOR EID!! – JA'FAR") has been viewed over 7.4 million times on YouTube. In this video, six religious figures from diverse backgrounds join the discussion: *Habib* Ja'far (Islam), *Bhante* Dira (Buddhism), Yanmita Diarsana (Hinduism), Kristan (Confucianism), *Romo* Aan (Catholicism), and Pastor Bryan (Protestant Christianity). They discuss the importance of tolerance from their respective religious perspectives. Despite differing approaches, they agree that tolerance is fundamental to maintaining Indonesia's diversity. They also emphasize that Indonesia is among the world's best examples of tolerance, serving as a model for other nations.

Beyond his expertise in interfaith dialogue, Habib Ja'far is known for his trendy and unconventional *da'wah* style, similar to Hanan Attaki's approach. He skillfully uses contemporary youth language, making his messages more accessible to young audiences. This style has led to numerous invitations to appear on popular YouTube podcasts and national television programs. Through digital *da'wah,* Habib Ja'far has successfully shaped a narrative of Islam that is friendly, inclusive, and relevant to today's generation (Ervinda, 2023).

Third, *Ustaz* Abdul Somad. This preacher, who gained viral popularity on social media, has effectively utilized digital platforms for Islamic *da'wah.* He is widely recognized and frequently invited to deliver sermons in various countries, including Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore. His popularity has skyrocketed due to his engaging sermon style, which incorporates contemporary themes, humor, and assertive delivery. Abdul Somad often addresses issues affecting the Muslim community from a hadith-based perspective, drawing from his education in Hadith Studies at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt.

**Figure 8.** Abdul Somad's humorous sermon on YouTube



*Source: YouTube, 2024.*

His humorous delivery makes his sermons easy to understand and often filled with laughter. This approach represents a significant shift from traditional sermon styles, which tend to be rigid and serious. Abdul Somad effectively uses humor to make religious discussions feel lighter and more digestible. In one of his YouTube sermons titled *"Ceramah Lucu, Jemaah Tak Sanggup Tahan Tawa"* (Funny Sermon, Congregants Can't Stop Laughing), the title does not explicitly indicate religious content, yet the sermon remains deeply rooted in Islamic teachings. This strategy has successfully drawn thousands of online followers, establishing *Ustaz* Abdul Somad (UAS) as one of the most followed preachers in the digital space.

Fourth, NU Garis Lucu (@nugarislucu). This social media account, active on Instagram, X, and Facebook, has amassed a large following among both Nahdliyin and the general public. The name "NU Garis Lucu" is a playful take on "NU Garis Lurus," a term referring to a faction of NU considered the true and unaltered version. On Instagram and X, the account has over 900,000 followers. Its content, primarily images paired with light humor, conveys religious values effectively. This approach has made religion feel more accessible and engaging for social media audiences, challenging the notion that religious topics must always be solemn and untouchable. Instead, NU Garis Lucu has helped reshape perceptions of Islam, making it appear less rigid and more relatable.

**Figure 9.** NU Garis Lucu's lighthearted religious content



*Source: Instagram@nugarislucu, 2024.*

The image above illustrates a humorous post from NU Garis Lucu: *"Gus Dur. He did not leave behind division but holidays (laughing emoji). Happy Lunar New Year holiday."* This post humorously refers to former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), who officially recognized Confucianism, making Lunar New Year a national holiday. While comedic, the content conveys religious messages about tolerance and interfaith harmony in Indonesia.

Fifth, *Ustazah* Oki Setiana Dewi. Although initially known as an actress and public figure, she gained wider recognition as a preacher, particularly among female audiences. She starred in the 2009 film *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih*, the most-watched Islamic drama film in Indonesia (Sarifah, 2023). Her fame became a stepping stone into Islamic preaching, where she is now recognized for her intelligence and broad knowledge, attracting many followers on social media.

**Figure 10.** Oki Setiana Dewi's sermon on women's issues
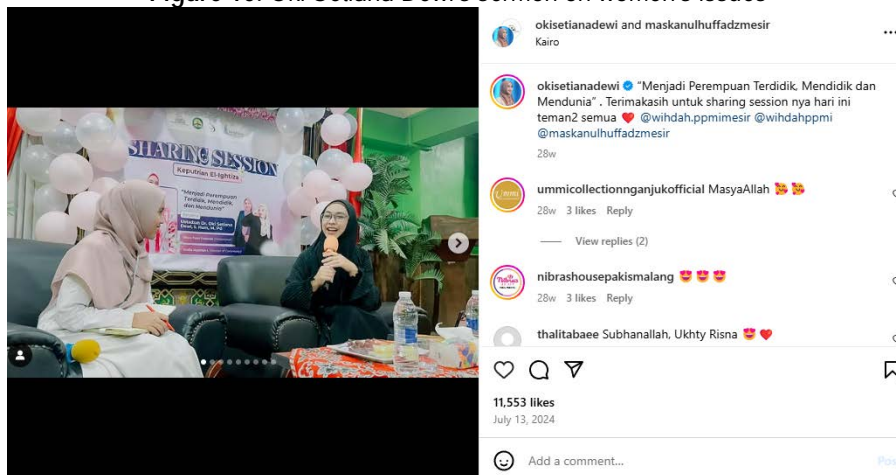


*Source: Instagram @okisetianadewi, 2024.*

In addition, she frequently shares moments of togetherness with her family, which many of her followers online imitate. As a result, she is also referred to as a Muslim family influencer. She has posted countless photos with her family on her social media platforms. Thanks to her popularity, she has become the face of various advertisements for products such as Umrah travel services, Muslim clothing, hijabs, and women's beauty products. Because of this, she is seen not only as a preacher who conveys Islam's teachings on women in a non-rigid way but also as an example of what a true Muslim woman looks like. Being able to appear in public and become an influencer is now an achievable dream for Muslim women.

### Challenges in Digital *Da'wah*

The presence of *da'wah* in the digital world has helped shape a positive image of Islam on social media. Islam is now perceived as neither frightening nor opposed to modernity. Islamic preaching has become more fluid and is no longer confined to mosques or schools; it has now reached hangout spots, food stalls, and even shopping malls. However, this also presents new challenges, particularly concerning the credibility of preachers, their attitudes, and their statements, which often spark controversy among various groups.

The five preachers and accounts previously reviewed have also generated public controversy. On the one hand, this is understandable because a significant transformation has taken place in Islamic preaching, moving away from traditional methods. On the other hand, numerous challenges arise, which can sometimes damage the image of Islam itself.

For example, *Ustaz* Hanan Attaki was once involved in a controversy when he was accused of insulting Prophet Musa. He referred to Prophet Musa as the "thug of the prophets." *"When I narrated the story of Prophet Musa AS, if one listens to the full lecture, I was actually highlighting the greatness of Prophet Musa. However, when the clip was taken out of context, it only showed me calling Prophet Musa 'the thug of the prophets,' which made it seem like I was insulting him,"* he explained (quoted from YouTube Hanan Attaki, 2023). This statement offended many Muslims because the term "thug" has a negative connotation—it is associated with criminals and bad behavior. This controversy resulted from his frequent use of colloquial language, which is not always well-received by everyone. He later clarified his statement and apologized to the public (Detik.com, 2023).

*Habib* Ja'far also faced controversy when he was accused of being a Shia adherent due to his digital footprint on Twitter. One of his tweets stated, *"Let us echo the words of Al-Husain, the poetry of Karbala, and the nasyid of Ashura because Husain was martyred on the land of Karbala."* In response to this accusation, *Habib* Ja'far denied it, calling it slander. *"I imagine that the people spreading these accusations are lounging in undershirts and shorts, casually making baseless claims about me. If they don't take it seriously, why should I? They are playing around with serious matters while I take serious matters lightly,"* he said (Siregar, 2023).

These accusations emerged because many considered his arguments too "liberal" and believed he expressed excessive tolerance when discussing Islamic values, especially in various podcasts he participated in. Critics accused him of having no boundaries when preaching Islam and even undermining its values in public. Consequently, he was frequently labeled as a Shia. Additionally, his eccentric style led some Islamic groups to dislike his approach to preaching Islam.

Similarly, Abdul Somad, a *da'i* from Riau, Sumatra, has been scrutinized by netizens multiple times for his public speeches. He was reported to the police by the Indonesian Church Youth Association (PPGI) for allegedly insulting the cross by calling it a *"jin kafir"* (infidel spirit). In his clarification, UAS stated that he never intended to insult the cross or Christianity (Setiawan, 2019). He explained that the sermon took place years earlier in a private religious gathering at a mosque in Pekanbaru, Riau. This controversy is also linked to UAS's preaching style, which is firm and direct (Prireza, 2019). Although he often incorporates humor, his sermons attract many followers due to his strong defense of Islam.

The NU Garis Lucu account has also sparked controversy. In response to a news report about an imam being hit with a sandal by a congregation member, NU Garis Lucu commented: *"The lesson here is, if you intend to recite long surahs during Tarawih, you should also train your wushu reflexes."* This comment seemed to ridicule the imam for reciting long verses, implying that the congregation disliked it, leading to the attack. However, this was not the case. The comment faced backlash from netizens, including *Ustaz* Haidir, who criticized it as inaccurate and careless. *"Your humor this time is dry, admin. First, the narrative in the video is vague and tendentious, not factual. It's not hard to find a more reliable source that states the attacker was actually an individual with a mental disorder. Just search on Google, and you'll find it right away,"* he said. Indeed, the attacker was later confirmed to be suffering from a mental illness. Another user, Salman Al Farizi, also commented, *"The admin is a fool, hit by even bigger fools,"* while sharing a screenshot of a news headline stating, "Viral: Imam Attacked by Mentally Ill Person During Prayer, Netizens Say He Had a Faith Disorder?" This incident highlights the consequences of prioritizing humor in conveying religious values. Without careful verification, such an approach can lead to serious misinterpretations.

Lastly, Oki Setiana Dewi also faced controversy in 2024 when she was accused of justifying domestic violence in one of her sermons. The controversy arose when she recounted an Islamic story about a married couple in conflict. During an argument, the husband hit his wife. At that moment, the wife's parents arrived. With teary eyes, the wife opened the door. The husband feared that his wife would report the incident to her parents. However, instead of exposing the conflict, the wife claimed she was crying because she missed her parents. *"Sometimes women exaggerate stories that don't align with reality. When people are angry or hurt, they tend to embellish their*

*narratives,"* Oki said in the video. This clip sparked a significant backlash from netizens. Many criticized her, including author Okky Madasari, who openly opposed her statement (CNN Indonesia, 2022).

### A New Face of Islam in the Digital World

Islam, which was once considered unfriendly to the internet and the development of digital technology, has now become one of the most adaptive religions in the online world. Initially, many were concerned that the presence of the internet would bring negative impacts on Islamic values, distort the essence of religious teachings, and worsen the image of Muslims. However, the reality turned out to be the opposite. The internet, with all its freedom, has opened doors for broader, more dynamic, and widely accepted Islamic preaching. This has transformed the image of Islam, which was once seen as rigid and conservative, into a more flexible one, no longer bound by space and time.

This phenomenon reflects how Islam can adapt to modernity without losing its identity. According to Gary R. Bunt (2003) in his book *Islam in the Digital Age*, Islam demonstrates a highly adaptive nature toward the internet, allowing Muslims to use technology as an effective medium for preaching. By utilizing digital platforms, preachers and scholars can now reach a wider audience, even those who are unreachable by traditional preaching methods. This preaching is no longer confined to mosques or schools but extends to coffee shops, malls, and social media, making Islam more accessible and understood by its followers (Bunt, 2009).

However, behind this success, there are significant challenges that Muslims must face in the digital world. Controversies arising from some preachers, such as those experienced by Hanan Attaki, *Habib* Ja'far, and Abdul Somad, as well as accounts like NU Garis Lucu and Oki Setiana Dewi, show that freedom of speech in the online world does not always align with the accuracy in delivering messages. For instance, Hanan Attaki faced criticism for using the term *"premannya nabi"* (the prophet's thug), which was deemed insulting to Prophet Musa, or Abdul Somad, who got entangled in a case of insulting the symbols of another religion. Some preaching accounts have even fallen into spreading fake news and unverified rumors. These phenomena urge Muslims to be more discerning when consuming content in the digital world.

The phenomenon of Islamic preaching in the digital world reflects a shift in the way religion is conveyed. As explained in the *Living Religions* theory by Fisher and Rinehart (2017), religion, including Islam, should not be something alienated by modernity and technology. On the contrary, religion should evolve and adapt to the context of the times. In the context of digital *da'wah*, Islam has proven capable of keeping pace with the times without falling into division or losing the substance of its teachings. Unlike some other religions that are more resistant to change, Islam shows its ability to develop and be disseminated in ways that are more relevant to the needs of modern society.

However, this process of adaptation is certainly not without challenges. One of the main challenges is how to balance freedom of expression with the responsibility of maintaining accuracy and caution in delivering religious messages. The diversity in preaching styles, which includes the use of colloquial language, humor, and an emphasis on values like tolerance and women's issues, shows that digital Islamic preaching has broad appeal. However, this freedom can be dangerous if not properly managed, especially when controversial statements or negligence in fact-checking lead to confusion.

The implications of this finding are crucial. The use of digital media as a means of preaching offers a huge potential to spread the message of Islam to more people, especially the younger generation, who are more exposed to the online world. With proper utilization, digital preaching can strengthen a moderate, tolerant, and progressive understanding of Islam. However, if not balanced with moral and intellectual responsibility, it can lead to division, misinformation, and damage to the image of Islam. Therefore, preachers and digital account managers need to maintain the quality of the messages they deliver, prioritize clarification when mistakes occur, and exercise caution when using language or terms that may offend certain groups.

Furthermore, Muslims should also be more discerning in accepting information disseminated through digital platforms. Despite the many variations in preaching styles, the public needs to understand the context and purpose of the preaching and avoid getting caught up in sectarian conflicts. This will help create a more harmonious atmosphere online, where Islam can flourish without division.

The spread of Islamic preaching in the digital world cannot be separated from the challenges that come with freedom of speech on the internet. The nature of the internet, which allows all kinds of information to be disseminated quickly and widely, leads to the circulation of opinions, both supportive and critical (Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2020). In this context, preaching done in new ways, such as by young preachers or preaching accounts,

can have a significant impact. However, this freedom also opens up the possibility of misuse. Controversial or inaccurate content can damage the image of Islam if there is no proper supervision and clarification.

In conclusion, this finding shows that while digital preaching offers great potential for spreading Islam more widely, it also carries a significant responsibility for those involved in disseminating information. Balancing freedom of expression with caution in delivering religious messages is key to ensuring that digital *da'wah* remains effective and does not cause division among Muslims.

## CONCLUSION

This study successfully reveals that Islamic preaching in the digital world demonstrates a significant adaptation phenomenon, which was previously not widely identified in earlier research. One of the most important findings is how Islam can optimize the use of digital platforms, such as social media, video, and podcasts, to spread religious messages broadly. Contrary to the assumption that Islam would be left behind by modernity and technology, this research shows that Islam is highly adaptive to digital developments, even becoming the most present religion in the online world. The diversity in preaching approaches—from the use of colloquial language to humor relevant to daily life—opens opportunities for Islamic preaching to be accepted by various groups, especially the younger generation. This phenomenon proves that Islam is not only capable of adapting to technology but also changing the perspective on preaching processes that are more inclusive and reach different layers of society.

However, this finding also highlights the emergence of controversial phenomena in the online world due to preachers who are less cautious in delivering their preaching content. One innovation of this study is its emphasis on the importance of caution in the dissemination of preaching information, as freedom in the digital world often leads to incorrect message delivery, which can cause divisions among groups. As various preachers use different approaches, including humor and controversial issues, Islamic preaching in the digital world must be more prudent in managing messages to avoid misinformation or fragmentation. This finding serves as a warning to Muslims not to accept preaching information uncritically but to be more selective and critical of the content being delivered.

This study's contribution lies in the development of the concept of digital *da'wah* in Islam, which is more responsive to changes in time and technology. This research successfully shows that Islam can be presented in a way that is relevant to the digital context without losing the essence of its teachings. On the other hand, this study also introduces the importance of ethics in digital preaching, which serves as a guide for preachers and Muslims in navigating the content that evolves in the digital world. In addition, this study enriches the theory of *Living Religions* in the context of modernity, which has mostly been applied to religions considered more traditional.

However, this study also has limitations, one of which is the scope limited to a few preachers and preaching content in Indonesia, so the results do not fully represent the phenomenon of digital Islamic preaching in other countries. Future research could focus on a more in-depth analysis of the impact of digital preaching on changes in the attitudes and behaviors of Muslims, as well as further exploration of how digital platforms can be optimally used to enhance understanding of moderate and inclusive religion. Additionally, further research could delve deeper into the ethical challenges and the impact of digital *da'wah* on inter-group relationships within the broader Muslim community.

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