

When Fatwa Meets Algorithm: Unraveling The Ethics and Law of Digital Da'wah and Islamic Counseling

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Abstract: The digital era has fundamentally transformed the landscape of Islamic *da'wah* and counseling. This study explores how technological advancements particularly the emergence of social media, video platforms, and artificial intelligence have reshaped the way Islamic messages are communicated and how ethical challenges arise from this transformation. Using a qualitative descriptive method through library research, this study analyzes the dynamics between *fatwa* (traditional religious authority) and algorithms (digital authority) as dual forces influencing the dissemination of Islamic teachings in the digital age. The findings reveal that while digital media such as YouTube, Instagram, and other online platforms expand the reach of *da'wah* and provide accessibility for online counseling (*cyber counseling*), they also introduce new ethical and moral challenges, including misinformation, commercialization of religious content, and reduced interpersonal interaction. The integration of Islamic ethical principles such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *bikmah* (wisdom), and *akhlaq* (morality) is therefore essential to maintaining the authenticity and spiritual depth of digital *da'wah* and counseling practices. Ultimately, this study concludes that the synergy between *fatwa* and algorithm, ethics and technology, can enhance the effectiveness of Islamic *da'wah* and counseling by promoting moral integrity, digital literacy, and spiritual resilience in modern Muslim society.

Keywords: Digital Da'wah, Islamic Counseling, Ethics, Algorithm, Fatwa, Cyber Counseling

INTRODUCTION

The digital era has brought about a profound transformation in the way religious teachings and guidance are delivered, fundamentally reshaping traditional methods. Da'wah, which was traditionally known as *fatwa*, is now confronted by modern da'wah, referred to as *algorithmic da'wah*. The advancement of digital technology has significantly influenced the practice of Islamic instruction and guidance. Religious advice and fatwas, which were once obtained solely through institutions, scholars, and recognized teachers, are now also governed by algorithms through social media platforms and artificial intelligence, which shape how religious information is distributed and perceived.

Algorithms and fatwas now operate as two interconnected sources of authority. Acting as guidance for Muslims in their daily behavior, *fatwas* originate from scholarly interpretations of religious law. In contrast, algorithms are computer-based systems that manage the processing, personalization, and presentation of data to individuals through digital media. The merging of these entities has given rise to a dialogue between traditional and digital forms of authority. Social media algorithms have built new forms of authority for popular religious preachers, compelling conventional religious leaders to adapt to the principles of digital dissemination.

In earlier historical periods, conventional religious teaching resembled the sermons delivered by the *Walisongo* (the Nine Saints), whose teaching methods incorporated elements of art and culture. Although the term *Walisongo* means “nine saints,” their actual number exceeded nine. The word *Wali* originates from Arabic, meaning “a beloved one,” while *Songo* comes from Javanese, meaning “nine.” Thus, *Walisongo* can be interpreted as “nine beloved figures.” According to the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, the *Walisongo* are characterized as nine saints deeply devoted to Allah SWT, steadfast in their religious practices, and committed to worshipping Allah SWT.

In the past, personal relationships flourished because people were more interdependent. Interactions during that time were far more meaningful compared to today’s digital world. This reflects the *Walisongo*’s approach in spreading Islam, utilizing cultural and artistic elements embedded in society. The *Walisongo* developed strategic plans to ensure the smooth spread of Islam. These plans involved dividing regions and adopting friendly and persuasive communication styles. Their strategies were crafted with careful consideration of each area’s geographic importance. The *Walisongo* were highly deliberate in selecting the regions for Islamic propagation, prioritizing strategically located areas.

They employed a persuasive approach, focusing on teaching Islamic principles while adapting to local circumstances. For example, Sunan Ampel, who preached to Adipati Aria Damar of Palembang, succeeded in converting him to Islam through kindness and wisdom. The *Walisongo* also used persuasive approaches when engaging with influential figures, thereby avoiding conflict. They provided clean water to meet both the physical and spiritual needs of the community. The *Walisongo* effectively utilized culture and art to support the successful spread of Islam.

However, with the advancement of the digital era, developments in information and communication technology have significantly impacted various aspects of life—particularly how Islam is propagated. Digital platforms such as social media, blogs, and video-sharing websites have become primary tools for preachers to deliver religious messages to broader audiences. With millions of users on these platforms, digital da’wah offers opportunities to connect with wider and more diverse groups than ever before.

Nonetheless, the ease of accessing information has also introduced several challenges. One major issue is the spread of misinformation or misleading content. With the proliferation of fake news and unethical materials, it is crucial for preachers to possess a solid understanding of ethical guidelines in da’wah.

Ethics in da’wah encompass the moral standards and principles that preachers must adhere to when conveying religious messages. This not only involves ensuring the accuracy of shared information but also the manner of its delivery, which must align with Islamic values. Moreover, digital media often becomes a space for disputes and conflicts arising from differences in belief. Content designed to provoke or generate controversy can quickly spread and trigger negative reactions from the public.

In such situations, preachers must be wise and cautious in choosing their words and constructing arguments to prevent misunderstandings or even divisions within the community. Sermons or religious content that disregard ethical considerations can lead to social fragmentation and disrupt communal harmony.

Furthermore, technological advancements have introduced new approaches to delivering sermons, including leveraging the popularity of online figures and influencers to disseminate religious messages. Although this strategy can expand the audience for religious teachings, there is concern that the essential meaning and completeness of the message may be compromised if not carefully managed. Therefore, it is essential for religious preachers to learn how to effectively use digital platforms without sacrificing ethical and moral principles in their preaching.

Hence, possessing a strong understanding of ethical considerations in delivering sermons through digital channels is crucial. Religious communicators must acquire the necessary skills and competencies to convey messages that are not only truthful but also aligned with Islamic teachings and widely accepted within society.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method, designed to explore and comprehensively describe the phenomenon of ethics within digital platforms. Descriptive qualitative research emphasizes providing a thorough account of a phenomenon, utilizing information collected naturally without influencing the measured variables. The aim of this study is to develop a comprehensive and integrated understanding of the topic being explored, particularly the difficulties and resolutions related to ethical issues in *da'wah* on digital media.

The selection of this method is based on its suitability for addressing research questions of an exploratory and interpretative nature. Rather than testing hypotheses, this research seeks to understand the mechanisms and significance behind certain occurrences. The descriptive aspect of this study assists in identifying crucial factors that influence challenges and solutions within the context of digital *da'wah*.

The method used for data collection involves a review of existing literature. A literature review is a methodical procedure that includes gathering, examining, and evaluating information obtained from various sources, including scientific publications, books, articles, and other related digital resources. This approach allows researchers to utilize established sources to enhance the depth of the theoretical framework and prior research findings concerning *da'wah* ethics, digital media, and communication barriers in the contemporary era.

The data collection process includes selecting relevant literature based on specific criteria, such as its relevance to the research subject, the reliability of the sources, and its contribution to the ongoing discourse. The collected data then undergo rigorous analysis to understand trends, overarching ideas, and interconnections among related variables.

In this study, the literature review plays an important role in exploring the moral foundation of *da'wah*, the obstacles faced by *da'i* (preachers) in the digital media environment, and the solutions suggested by communication and religious experts. This methodology establishes a robust framework for understanding how digital media can be utilized effectively and ethically to disseminate Islamic principles. The findings obtained from this literature analysis serve as the basis for formulating conclusions relevant to the research questions posed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Da'wah Ethics

Ethics represent a set of social behavioral principles that distinguish between commendable and reprehensible conduct. In Islam, communication ethics serve as a safeguard, ensuring that messages are conveyed without offending others. This principle also applies to da'wah (Islamic preaching). Those engaged in da'wah must strive for effective communication, use polite language, and avoid provoking conflict. People tend to be more receptive to messages delivered with wisdom and ethical consideration. In today's interconnected world, social media platforms such as YouTube have emerged as vital tools for da'wah. For instance, Ustadz Hanan Attaki utilizes this platform effectively to disseminate Islamic teachings. Preachers must understand and apply the ethical principles of da'wah, fostering a community characterized by mutual respect and support.

Conversely, da'wah involves the act of inviting, appealing, or delivering a call. It is an appeal or supplication to God, grounded in obedience to His commands and the preservation of steadfast faith. Da'wah includes invitations—whether expressed through speech, writing, action, or other means—carried out consciously and purposefully to influence individuals or groups. The objective is to cultivate understanding, awareness, attitude, appreciation, and practice of religious teachings as messages intended for humanity, free from any form of coercion. Hence, the essence of da'wah lies in inviting, motivating, stimulating, and guiding individuals toward the voluntary acceptance of religious principles for their personal growth not merely for the benefit of the preacher.

According to Toha Yahya Omar, da'wah ethics encompass meaningful actions driven by good intentions. He emphasizes the close relationship between da'wah ethics and everyday behavior, as well as the rules that preachers must uphold. As a specific example, he highlights the importance of demonstrating politeness and sincerity in interactions with others. Da'wah ethics provide a structured framework for understanding the rationale behind a preacher's commitment to maintaining certain norms in life and action. This requires careful consideration of a preacher's conduct to ensure adherence to ethical standards recognized and respected by society.

In the practice of da'wah, ethical considerations are essential for all stakeholders. This aims to ensure that society fully accepts da'wah as a medium and that it contributes to building a social order aligned with Islamic teachings. As stated in Tomi Hendra's journal, da'wah ethics focus on how a da'i (preacher) positions themselves as a servant when conveying religious messages, with the hope of producing a constructive impact on listeners or followers, ultimately guiding them toward self-improvement.

Therefore, da'wah must align with its true purpose to call humanity toward good and prevent wrongdoing. It must emulate the example of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in promoting his teachings based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. In conclusion, da'wah ethics refer to the manner in which a da'i fulfills the duty of spreading religious knowledge with the aim of fostering constructive development among those who listen to or practice it. The goal of da'wah is to encourage people to abandon negative behavior and to promote virtuous conduct in accordance with the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Da'wah is a noble endeavor that requires effective organization and sufficient resources to ensure its smooth execution and the fulfillment of its intended objectives.

The Law of Da'wah

The law of *da'wah* encompasses two key terms: *law* and *da'wah*. As stated by M. H. Tirtaatmadja, law is a set of guidelines (rules) that must be obeyed in social behavior, accompanied

by sanctions imposed on those who violate these rules and endanger themselves or their property. Conversely, in Arabic, the term *da'wah* derives from the root word *da'a yad'u*, which means a call, encouragement, or invitation. *Da'wah* includes calls or exhortations directed toward individuals, inviting them to do good and to prevent wrongdoing (*munkar*).

Thus, the meaning of *da'wah* can be understood as a set of rules that establish the duties and methods of carrying out religious preaching in accordance with Islamic teachings. Regarding the *law of da'wah* itself, there are various perspectives reflecting differing interpretations among scholars. According to the Holy Qur'an, religious scholars generally agree that *da'wah* is a duty (*wajib*), though opinions differ on whether it constitutes an individual obligation (*fard 'ayn*) for every Muslim or a collective obligation (*fard kifayah*) for the community as a whole. These differing opinions stem from varying understandings of scriptural arguments.

The primary Qur'anic foundation for this view is found in *Surah Ali Imran* (3:104):

الْمُفْلِحُونَ هُمْ وَأُولَئِكَ ۗ ۖ الْمُنْكَرَ عَنْ وَيَنْهَوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْخَيْرِ إِلَى يَدْعُونَ أُمَّةً مِّنْكُمْ وَلَتَكُن
 Translation: "And let there be among you a group of people who invite to goodness, enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and it is they who will be successful." (QS. Ali Imran [3]: 104)

Forbidding wrongdoing is an unrestricted obligation it is not limited to specific individuals but applies to every Muslim. Therefore, anyone who neglects this duty must engage in self-correction through personal *jihad*. This indicates that promoting good and preventing evil is a collective responsibility shared among all Muslims. Fulfilling these duties ensures that the teachings of Islam are properly practiced, thereby bringing blessings from Allah SWT. Consequently, the implementation of *da'wah* should be aligned with each individual's capacity, and no one should be compelled to preach beyond their knowledge or ability.

M. Natsir asserts that both Muslim men and women share equal responsibility in *da'wah*. No Muslim may avoid this obligation. Similarly, Toha Yahya Omar explains that the legal foundation for the obligatory nature of *da'wah* is found in *Surah an-Nabl* (16:125):

ضَلَّ بِمَنْ أَعْلَمَ هُوَ رَبِّكَ إِنَّ ۗ أَحْسَنَ هِيَ بِالَّتِي وَجَادِلْهُمْ الْحَسَنَةَ وَالْمَوْعِظَةَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ رَبِّكَ سَبِيلَ إِلَى أُدْع
 بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ أَعْلَمَ وَهُوَ سَبِيلُهُ عَنْ
 Translation: "Invite (all) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in the best manner. Indeed, your Lord knows best who has strayed from His path, and He knows best who is rightly guided." (QS. An-Nabl [16]: 125)

According to Toha Yahya Omar, the obligation of *da'wah* implied in this verse derives from the word *ud'u* ("invite"), which is an imperative verb form. In the principles of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, a command (*amr*) denotes an obligation (*wajib*) unless there is other evidence that shifts its status from obligatory (*wajib*) to recommended (*sunnah*) or another category.

Digital Counseling

Counseling is essentially an activity in which a counselor assists an individual (the counselee) who is facing challenges in finding solutions. The primary goal of counseling is to facilitate the

counselee's journey toward deeper self-awareness and understanding of their environment. Through counseling sessions, the counselee is expected to live a happier, more comfortable, and more productive life. On the other hand, advancements in information and communication technology have led to the emergence of a new counseling method known as *cyber counseling* or *online counseling*.

Digital counseling (*cyber counseling*) is described as a professional counseling service that utilizes electronic communication via the internet when the counselor and the counselee are in different locations. It involves the use of internet-based networks within the counseling process. This method broadens the reach of counseling services. Counselors can also incorporate various digital tools into their sessions through *cyber counseling*, such as multimedia resources or interactive software, which can enhance the overall impact of the counseling activity.

Cyber counseling employs a variety of digital media, including email, chat, and telephone. The use of these technologies allows counseling to take place beyond geographical and time constraints, thereby expanding access to counseling in areas with limited professional resources. *Cyber counseling* offers numerous advantages, such as flexibility in scheduling and location, better client anonymity, and the ability to reach individuals who may have difficulty accessing traditional in-person counseling services.

Nevertheless, several ethical and practical challenges must be addressed, including issues related to privacy, confidentiality, and data protection. *Cyber counseling* provides an opportunity to expand the availability of counseling services, particularly in remote areas. Integrating technology into counseling procedures enhances accessibility and encourages creativity in counseling strategies and approaches. The digital revolution has dramatically transformed how people interact and connect with one another. Global platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter have evolved into major social media hubs that enable users around the world to communicate and exchange information rapidly.

This phenomenon not only influences daily life but also has a significant impact on various professions, including counseling. Given their vital role in supporting emotional and mental growth, counselors must evolve in line with ongoing technological breakthroughs. Since the individuals they counsel—especially the younger generation—are deeply connected to technology in their daily routines, counselors must integrate an understanding of the digital world into their counseling methods. Counselors should be capable of understanding how social media and other digital resources shape the thoughts, behaviors, and emotional well-being of those they counsel. Furthermore, they must develop the ability to utilize these technologies as tools within their counseling approaches, such as by using stress-reduction applications or web-based communication systems for remote counseling sessions.

CONCLUSION

The digital era presents both vast opportunities and significant challenges for Islamic da'wah and counseling. Fatwa as a moral foundation must be harmonized with algorithms as a means of message distribution, ensuring that da'wah is not only far-reaching but also ethical and spiritually grounded. Likewise, digital counseling provides easier access for the public but still requires ethical management to maintain confidentiality and the quality of interaction. The key to successful da'wah and counseling in the digital era lies in the ability of da'i and counselors to integrate Islamic values (trustworthiness, wisdom, ethics) with digital communication skills, so that technology can truly

serve as a tool to strengthen the unity of the ummah, enhance psychological well-being, and build a digital civilization that is both moral and spiritual.

The development of digital technology has brought major changes to the practice of Islamic da'wah and counseling. On one hand, digitalization opens a wider space for da'wah with unlimited reach, creating great opportunities to deliver Islamic messages more effectively, quickly, and interactively. On the other hand, it also gives rise to challenges such as the misuse of digital media, the spread of misleading information, and the potential for polarization within the ummah if da'wah ethics are not upheld. Therefore, the legacy of Walisongo which emphasized persuasive, social, and cultural approaches remains relevant as a foundation, but it must be adapted to the principles of modern da'wah ethics such as accuracy, courtesy, and unity of the ummah.

In addition, Islamic counseling has also undergone transformation through the emergence of digital counseling (cyber counseling). This form of service provides accessibility and flexibility for the public, especially for younger generations, yet it also raises ethical issues, particularly concerning confidentiality, the limitation of non-verbal interaction, and the security of personal data. This demands that counselors not only possess professional competence but also understand the psychosocial dynamics of the digital world and be able to integrate Islamic values such as trust, responsibility, and wisdom in online counseling practice.

Ultimately, fatwa as a traditional moral authority and algorithms as modern digital instruments can work synergistically for the benefit of the ummah. The collaboration between the two can create da'wah and counseling that are more relevant, ethical, and far-reaching. With the integration of Islamic values and digital literacy skills, da'i and counselors can utilize technology not only to connect people externally but also to cultivate spiritual strength, moral integrity, and a digital civilization grounded in Islamic principles.

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