

YouTube as a Medium for Preaching and Counseling: Digital Opportunities and Challenges

Rifa Fahira Hidayah, Rahmadaniatul Nuzulia

UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya

rifalaptoplnv@gmail.com, rahmadaniatulnuzulia10@gmail.com

Corresponding Autor: Rifa Fahira Hidayah

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Abstract: The advancement of digital technology has transformed Islamic preaching (dakwah) and counseling, with YouTube emerging as one of the most influential platforms. This study examines the effectiveness of YouTube in disseminating Islamic messages and the challenges of using it for online counseling. Employing a qualitative content analysis of selected channels, the research finds that YouTube effectively engages audiences through interactive features such as comments and live chats, while its flexibility allows users to access content anytime and anywhere. Creative and contextual approaches in dakwah content have enhanced religious understanding and attracted younger audiences. However, the use of YouTube for counseling faces limitations, including privacy risks, reduced non-verbal interaction, and the spread of unethical or misleading content. The study concludes that professionalism, digital literacy, and strong ethical standards are essential to maximize YouTube's role as a safe and effective medium for dakwah and counseling.

Keywords: Digital Dakwah, Youtube, Online Counseling, Digital Literacy

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology in the modern era has had a major impact on various aspects of life, including in the fields of preaching and counseling. Based on data from *We Are Social* and Hootsuite (2024), the number of internet users in Indonesia has reached more than 212 million people, with YouTube ranking as one of the most popular digital platforms accessed by 94.8% of internet users. This fact shows the enormous potential of digital media as a means of delivering religious messages and counseling services that can reach the public in a broad, fast, and interactive manner (Athoiful Fanan et al. 2023).

Islamic preaching, which was previously mostly done through direct lectures in mosques, majelis taklim, or conventional media such as radio and television, has now transformed into a digital form. Various da'wah content, ranging from short videos, live streaming, to articles and infographics, has become a new strategy in delivering religious messages (Hasan et al. 2022). YouTube, in particular, has become the most widely used platform because it is able to present attractive audio-visual content that is easy to understand and popular with the younger generation. The success of preaching on YouTube can be seen from the high number of viewers, positive responses from the public, and the tangible impact on religious understanding and attitudes. This

shows that digital media, when managed properly, can be an effective means of expanding the reach of preaching.

On the other hand, the use of digital media also poses serious challenges, especially in the practice of online counseling. Various cases of failure and controversy still often occur, either due to the counselor's lack of understanding in utilizing digital platforms, errors in conveying messages, violations of the code of ethics, or the risk of personal data leaks. This situation shows that the use of digital media in preaching and counseling requires professionalism, caution, and a deep ethical understanding. (Nurul Husaini 2025)

Based on this, this journal will highlight two main aspects: first, the success of preaching through YouTube as an effective digital medium; second, failures or controversies in online counseling practices due to misuse of the platform. Thus, this discussion is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the opportunities and challenges of digital preaching and counseling, so that it can be used as a reference in developing practices that are more effective, safe, and beneficial to society.

METHOD

The research method used is qualitative analysis. Qualitative research is a highly critical and in-depth study designed to produce maximum results. Qualitative analytical research aims to illustrate, explain, describe, and answer problems in detail by studying an event, group, or individual as a whole. The method used in the research is also digital content analysis, which is research that takes data from digital displays. Data was obtained through observation of preachers' channels on YouTube. This research explains YouTube as a media strategy for millennial preaching because the delivery of the preaching does not seem monotonous and keeps up with current millennial trends. This research found several terms on YouTube and several strategies to make preaching on YouTube media effective. (Sikumbang and Siahaan 2020)

DISCUSSION

Analysis of Examples of Successful Preaching Through YouTube

Preaching is an effort to improve religious understanding in order to improve one's outlook on life by incorporating Islamic law, which was initially incompatible, to become compatible with Islamic law in order to obtain happiness in this life and the hereafter. The da'wah delivered must contain and relate to several elements that must be considered, namely: the messenger (da'i), the message delivered (maddah), the recipient of the message (mad'u), the medium of da'wah (wasillah), and the method of da'wah (thariqah). In order to achieve the objectives of da'wah, a da'i must be able to coordinate the elements of da'wah effectively and efficiently, using the media of da'wah. One thing that must be considered in the use of the media of da'wah is that nowadays, the internet is widely used as a very appropriate medium for da'wah, given its vast reach and the variety of information that can transcend space and time (Fitriyani et al. 2023).

In order not to fall behind the changes that will occur in preaching, preachers need to be able to increase their broad knowledge, science, and strategies needed when carrying out preaching. A preacher should not be satisfied with what he has, such as knowledge, but must continue to learn 'throughout life'. In this era of increasingly sophisticated information, preachers must be able to improve their ability to use computers and the internet, which is a prerequisite that should not be underestimated. Then, in this era of modernization, science is increasingly multidisciplinary and complementary. Religious knowledge, which is the foundation for preachers, must continue to be

improved so that when they are operating in the field, they can be solid in front of the community by deepening their knowledge of other subjects. (Al-bayan et al. 2020)

According to Bahri Ghazali, in communication and da'wah activities, there is a parallelism that is complementary and complementary between one and the other. The existence of communication activities enables the implementation of da'wah activities, and likewise, da'wah means that communication tasks are also carried out. Therefore, it can be said that the relationship between communication and da'wah is a causal relationship, meaning that the more communication is carried out, the better the da'wah will be. (Al-bayan et al. 2020)

Along with its development in the era of globalization, da'wah has begun to develop both in its delivery and its media. Seeing this phenomenon, Islamic da'wah has a great opportunity to spread Islamic teachings throughout the world. In this case, the role of da'wah is very much needed considering that the function of da'wah is to invite people to do good. Media is a tool or means used to convey messages from communicators to the audience. Lexically, media is defined as a tool or means of communication such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, films, posters, and banners.

One of the most popular mass media today is YouTube. YouTube is one of the largest video service providers today, which can be uploaded for free. The benefit of using YouTube is that its content can be broadcast to millions of viewers. YouTube is available in almost every country in the world and on every computer with internet access, and is visited by millions of people every day. YouTube is currently one of the media used to convey religious messages. Religious messages conveyed by religious teachers are increasingly popular among the public, especially those who frequently access the internet (Effendy et al. 2023).

There are several reasons why preaching through YouTube is more effective in this millennial era:

1. Because Muslims have spread throughout the world, using the internet network as a medium to work through YouTube makes it easier for users to obtain knowledge that they did not have time to listen to in majelis taklim (Islamic study groups) or other places.
2. Islam can be easily introduced through uploads containing da'wah activities or matters related to Islamic teachings.
3. The use of YouTube as a medium for da'wah proves that Muslims are adapting to advances in digital technology while still adhering to Islamic guidelines. (Dwi et al. 2024)

Analysis of Examples of Successful Da'wah through YouTube:

Based on the researcher's observations, the interactive features on this channel, such as the comment section and live chat during live streaming sessions, serve not only as a means of one-way communication from the preacher to the audience, but also as a place for discussion among viewers. This reinforces the argument that this interaction is an important element in digital da'wah. Findings from participant observation also show that in some videos, discussions in the comment section are very active, with many viewers responding or asking further questions related to the da'wah material. This shows that the audience is not only passive consumers but also actively involved in understanding and discussing da'wah content. The results of the study show that the dakwah content on several YouTube channels has a positive impact on the religious understanding of students and the general public. Most respondents acknowledged that the material presented enriched their knowledge on various religious topics. Rosa (faculty of dakwah) stated, *"Interacting with the videos and discussions in the comments section has given me a better understanding of various religious issues. Previously, there were some things that I didn't really understand, but after watching the lectures and discussing them in the comments, I now understand better."*

The findings also show that preaching through YouTube is considered very effective by the audience. This is in line with the view that social media provides easier, more flexible, and faster access to disseminate religious information (Dwi et al. 2024). YouTube's ability to present lectures in a video format that can be accessed at any time provides its own advantages, especially for students who often have busy schedules. In this context, the flexibility offered by the YouTube platform greatly helps students to study religion independently and according to their own time, as expressed by Rosa, one of the respondents who said that *"I can study religion anywhere and anytime."*

By presenting tauhid preaching content in a creative and engaging way, preachers can use various presentation methods, including lectures, discussions, question and answer sessions, and discussions of contemporary topics relevant to tauhid, thereby attracting the interest of audiences from various backgrounds. In addition, by utilizing existing social media such as YouTube, the reach of da'wah becomes wider. Furthermore, da'wah is considered effective because communication effectiveness is measured by six indicators, namely, the communicator, message, channel/media, method, recipient, and effect/impact. Of these six indicators, the method indicator is considered the most important in shaping effective communication (Falo 2023). The response from the community shows that the da'wah content presented is able to have a positive impact on the formation of religious understanding and practice among the community. With each video published, the channels have succeeded in attracting public attention, as evidenced by the increasing number of subscribers and the high number of viewers for each video. Not only that, positive responses in the form of likes, comments, and shares from various groups of people also show that the content presented is able to stimulate the audience's thoughts and interest (Aini et al. 2024).

Studies of Failures or Controversies in Online Counseling Triggered by Misuse of the Platform

The development of digital technology such as YouTube has opened up great opportunities for preaching and counseling to reach a wide audience. Through this platform, preaching material and counseling services can be packaged in the form of lectures, educational videos, live broadcasts, and interactive question and answer sessions that can be accessed at any time. Such innovations allow counselors to provide flexible assistance and preachers to disseminate religious material in a more interesting way. However, behind these opportunities, there are a number of ethical and professional issues that should be watched out for. (Suharsono and Nurahman 2024).

From the perspective of online counseling, one of the most crucial issues is the confidentiality of client data. YouTube, as a public platform, is not designed to protect counseling privacy. The risk of data leaks and the disclosure of client identities can cause additional trauma and undermine trust in the service. The case of Betterhelp in the United States is a clear example, where the FTC (2023) found that sensitive client data was used for advertising purposes without clear consent. This shows that the failure to maintain privacy is not only a technical problem, but also an ethical issue. According to the code of ethics of the ACA (American Counseling Association, 2014) and ABKIN (Indonesian Guidance and Counseling Association, 2019), confidentiality is a fundamental principle that must not be violated. (Safitri et al. 2025) From an Islamic perspective, protecting the reputation and confidentiality of others is a moral obligation, as stated by the Prophet Muhammad SAW: "Whoever covers the shame of a Muslim, Allah will cover his shame in this world and the hereafter" (H.R Muslim). Thus, counselors who use digital media

must understand professional boundaries, not treat YouTube as a full-fledged therapy space, and implement security protocols and comment moderation to avoid stigma or cyberbullying.

Meanwhile, in terms of digital da'wah, the challenge lies in content quality and verification. YouTube allows anyone to produce da'wah videos, so the potential for spreading misinformation is enormous. Content that contains hate speech, violence, or negative stereotypes not only damages the image of Islam, but also has the potential to worsen social polarization. Several studies (Firman Maulidna et al. 2025) have found that there are da'wah channels that actually contain intolerant narratives. This shows that without digital literacy and good preaching ethics, digital media can become a means of spreading propaganda. The principle of tabayyun (clarification of information). Preaching should prioritize the value of rahmatan lil-`alamin, which is to convey religious messages with wisdom, gentleness, and benefits for all people. (Jannah 2021).

Thus, the use of YouTube as a medium for preaching and online counseling actually has great potential, but it also requires a high level of responsibility. Preachers and counselors need to maintain the quality of content, moderate comments, and strictly apply the principle of confidentiality. In addition, digital literacy is needed from both service providers and audiences so that YouTube can truly become an educational and useful tool. Without clear ethical principles, privacy, and regulations, the benefits of YouTube can actually turn into harm, whether in the form of the spread of misinformation, psychological trauma, or unwanted social conflict.

CONCLUSION

The use of YouTube as a medium for preaching has shown significant success in spreading Islamic teachings more widely, quickly, and attractively. Interactive features such as comments and live chat strengthen the relationship between preachers and audiences, so that preaching is not only one-way but also opens up space for discussion that deepens religious understanding. Creative and contextual content has proven to be able to increase the interest of the younger generation in learning about Islam and has a positive impact on the religious practices of the community.

On the other hand, the use of YouTube in online counseling practices still poses challenges. Privacy issues, limitations in non-verbal interaction, and the potential for misuse of the platform can have negative impacts if not managed properly. Therefore, professionalism, digital literacy, and the application of ethics are important aspects in utilizing digital media, so that preaching and counseling truly provide benefits and do not cause harm. Thus, YouTube has great potential to be an effective means of preaching and counseling if it is carried out wisely, ethically, and in accordance with Islamic principles.

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