



## Social Media for Islamic *Da'wah* and Peaceful Coexistence in Yorubaland, Nigeria

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### Abstract:

This study examined the effect of social media misuse for Islamic *Da'wah* on peaceful coexistence in Yorubaland, Nigeria, using a descriptive survey research design and an observational method. Data collected through a validated questionnaire were analyzed using simple percentage statistics. Findings reveal that the emergence of social media has significantly altered the patterns of Islamic *Da'wah* globally, but its utilization by certain Yoruba Muslim preachers (*Du'at*) has elicited conflicting reactions. It contends that some Yoruba *Du'at* has used social media platforms to spread misinformation, hate speech, name-calling, condemnation of fellow Muslims, and character defamation instead of providing forums for discussions on religious tolerance, dialogue, mutual understanding, and peaceful coexistence. This has invariably led to constant hostility and confrontation, disunity among religious sects, mistrust among the Muslim ummah, tensions, and an increasing tide of Islamophobia. Also, non-Muslims are contesting Islamic scholars' nature of *Da'wah* propagation, the viability of their messages, and even the level of religious tolerance in Islam. The study concludes that contemporary Yoruba *Du'at* should harness the potential of social media in the course of *Da'wah* propagation to promote peaceful coexistence, foster a sense of unity among Muslim ummah, and avoid expressing outbursts that could potentially spark religious violence.

**Keywords:** *Da'wah*; *Du'at*; peaceful coexistence; social media; Yorubaland

### INTRODUCTION

Muslims today have embraced technology in all facets of their lives, demonstrating that utilizing technology is acceptable in Islam (Almerja, 2018; Zahran, 2023). Islam, however, has several restrictions and prescriptions about technology use. By highlighting its useful applications and admonishing against its potential risks and pitfalls, Islam promotes the responsible and ethical use of technology. As such, Muslims are encouraged to use technology to benefit humanity while keeping in mind their duties to Allah, society, and themselves. They are urged to refrain from engaging in activities that are harmful, unlawful, or violate Islamic principles, such as disseminating untrue information, engaging in cyberbullying, or utilizing technology to facilitate illegal actions like character



assassination, personal insults, and public display of one's flaws (Hamid, Meerangani & Zulkefli, et al., 2021; Islam Online, 2023).

Social media, as a form of digital technology, has transformed the way individuals communicate and exchange information online. It entails a variety of platforms and applications that allow audience to produce, share, and engage with information in a virtual social environment. The digital platforms also allow users to engage in real-time conversations, exchange photographs and videos, express their opinions, and stay up to date on current events and trends. Through social media, people and audiences who were previously inaccessible now have access to information, the barrier between the originator and the recipient of a message is reduced, and speedy discussions and easy information transfer are promoted. Overall, the emergence and continuous use of social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and WhatsApp, etcetera, has altered the global communication landscape (The Education Magazine, 2023; University Canada West, 2023).

The utilization of social media as a powerful instrument for Islamic *Da'wah*, or what is described as an act of spreading the word and teachings of Islam, has gained momentum in recent years. Globally, Muslim leaders, preachers, and organizations, as well as individual believers, have embraced social media channels to propagate and disseminate Islamic teachings as well as acquire relevant knowledge and information about Islam. According to Ibahrine (2014), social media has become an excellent tool for promoting the path of Islamic *Da'wah* through sharing Islamic views and values with the target audience. Through social media, Islamic *Da'wah* has the potential to reach millions of people who would not have been reached through traditional means. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube provide unique opportunities to share Islamic knowledge, engage in dialogue, and dispel misconceptions about Islam (Ibahrine, 2014; Lawal & Dauda, 2022). Sule and Lawal (2022) opine that social media can be used to spread Islamic lectures, inspirational Islamic stories, video clips of religious songs, wise sayings, and interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith.

However, recent trends have revealed the unfortunate incidents of abuse of social media for Islamic *Da'wah* among some Muslim preachers in Yorubaland. Existing studies have established how Yoruba Muslim preachers have utilized social media to perpetrate verbal abuse and attacks, unrestrained use of derogatory language, defamatory speech,

criticisms, and counter-criticisms, as well as slanderous and libelous comments, despite the significant efforts made by notable Islamic scholars to spread the religion and win the hearts of many unbelievers to the fold of Islam by employing various strategies (Alawiye & Paramole, 2022; Lawal & Dauda, 2022). This suggests that some Yoruba Muslim preachers have grossly abused social media in violation of the divine directives on *Da'wah* methodology outlined in the glorious Qur'an (AnNahl 16:125) and exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (SAAW) in his mission to spread the message of monotheism to the people in order to bring them out of darkness (kufr) and into the light (Islam). The foregoing situation calls for urgent attention from all stakeholders and timely interrogation for possible prevention, management, and resolution of such conflict.

Meanwhile, prior research has mostly concentrated on the positive and negative use of social media platforms for Islamic *Da'wah*. Few of these research examined the effects of Islamic preachers abusing social media on Yorubaland's future *Da'wah* efforts. None of these studies, however, have thought to investigate the effects of social media abuse on peaceful coexistence in Nigeria, particularly in Yorubaland. These are the scholarly gaps that the present study aims to fill. This work is crucial since it significantly advances the body of knowledge in the domains of Islamic Studies as well as Peace and Conflict Studies. The study is also very helpful for Islamic leaders, preachers, academics and Muslim organisations in Yorubaland since it examines the negative effects of social media abuse on peaceful coexistence and explains how to effectively and efficiently use digital technology for *Da'wah* propagation.

### **Research Objectives and Questions**

The study's main objective was to investigate how the use of social media for Islamic *Da'wah* has affected peaceful coexistence in Yorubaland, Nigeria. The study specifically highlights the forms of social media abuse by some Yoruba Muslim Preachers (*Du'at*) in the course of *Da'wah* engagement, and outlines the effects of social media abuse by those *Du'at* for peaceful coexistence in Yorubaland. Following the above-mentioned specific objectives, two research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the forms of social media abuse by some Yoruba Muslim Preachers in the course of *Da'wah* engagement?
2. How has social media abuse by some *Du'at* affected peaceful coexistence in Yorubaland?



## LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media has become the most powerful online communication tool of the twenty-first century. It has indeed not only revolutionised the communication process but also enhanced the availability, accessibility and dissemination of political, economic and socio-cultural information. As of 2019, there were 3.2 billion social media users worldwide. By April 2023, social media users have exponentially increased to 4.80 billion, accounting for 59.9% of the world's population (Data Reportal, 2023); the figure that is projected to increase to almost six billion in 2027 (Dixon, 2023). This demonstrates how digital media is becoming more and more prevalent in people's daily lives and interactions.

According to Lewis (2010), social media is a catch-all phrase encompassing technologies that allow people to generate and transmit content, as well as connect with and engage with others. It has become one of the primary places for individuals to receive information, allowing people to communicate and convey information in the form of photographs, videos, and audio, regardless of distance (Adegboyega, 2020). Alawiye and Paramole (2022), quoting Muhammad (2015), aver that social media allows people to participate in virtual communities and networks by creating, sharing, and exchanging information and ideas. It is a web-based tool that facilitates the exchange of user-generated content. The influence of social media is becoming more sophisticated, glamorous, and powerful as it steadily transforms society, making it more complex than the traditional media system.

In the opinion of Lawal and Dauda (2022, p. 233), *Da'wah* technically means "invitation to Islam" or "calling to obedience and worship of Allah (SWT), and the belief that no deity other than Him is worthy of worship." It also refers to the summons made by Allah (SWT) through His Prophets and Messengers to the individual, community, nation, and mankind to warn them of God's punishment for disbelieving and to bring them good news of the benefits for ultimate surrender to His will. Umar (2019) sees *Da'wah* as the process of propagating Islamic teachings and practises by *Du'at*, as well as a means for Muslims to understand their religious practises and non-Muslims to be drawn to the beauty of Islam. He explains further that *Da'wah* involves both a call from man to Allah (SWT) and a call from man to man, since the invitation of *Da'wah* is extended to both Muslims and unbelievers.

Social media has recently dominated religious teachings and proselytization. Muslim leaders, organisations and individuals have embraced these digital platforms to engage their followers. A study by Tarequl Islam (2019) demonstrates that in the case of Islamic *Da'wah*, all prophets did not utilise the same tools and procedures but instead employed distinct methods and techniques dependent on their context and situation. Digital technology can be a more effective tool for Islamic *Da'wah* in the age of modern science. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Skype, Instagram, WhatsApp, IMO, Telegram, Zoom, and others, have become more adaptive means of spreading Islamic teachings anywhere in the world than traditional modes of communication.

Mohsin Jafri (2016) maintains that digital media provides additional opportunities for Islamic groups to carry out Islamic *Da'wah*. Traditional media, he claims, makes it impossible to spread true Islam. Thus, social media is preferable due to its open platform, open communication, and rich content. The scholar concluded that social media has aided Muslim scholars in their attempts to spread the true message of Islam. Shehu, Othman, and Osman (2017) notes that Islam accepts social media but encourages Muslims to avoid behaviours that contradict Islamic beliefs. According to these scholars, the opportunities provided by social media are enormously positive. However, they may also have terrible consequences if not properly utilized and regulated, posing risks to Islam and the Muslim world. When appropriately used in accordance with the principles contained in Shari'ah, social media has a significant positive impact on Islam; it helps spread the cause of Allah (SWT) which could improve the condition of mankind and helps minimise vices in society.

Ibahrine (2014), while explaining the relevance of social media for religious proselytization (*Da'wah*), points out thus:

One type of Islamic use of social media platforms is proselytization, which is widely popular amongst Islamic preachers. Ironically enough, some deceased religious scholars have social media accounts in their names set up by their religious and intellectual followers in order to reach the younger generations. For many, social media has become an ideal platform, the new Mosque or madrasa, for the dissemination of the Islamic belief. These digital platforms led to the emergence of what some call "Facebook fatwas". F-Fatwas introduced a new paradigm to the practice of religious instructions in the way they were formulated, issued, disseminated, received and acted upon. F-Fatwas sparked commentary and feedback among many sectors of

Muslim societies, including religious authorities, Islamist intellectuals as well as young urban or secularised Muslims.

The scholar posits further that religious leaders and *Du'at* do not only use social media, regular Muslims equally tweet and post hadith (prophetic sayings) and verses from the Qur'an. During Ramadan when Muslims are both personally and outwardly stimulated to absorb and process religious content in the form of tweets and posts, is when the spread of religious content typically reaches its height. In addition, some Hajj pilgrims tweet feeds on Twitter and upload pictures and videos on Facebook and Instagram to give their families a sense of virtual spirituality throughout the Mecca trip. While the Islamic ummah's co-religiousness and co-piety are improved due to these practices, the way the Islamic faith is spread among believers and non-believers alike is altered by the social media revolution (Ibahrine, 2014).

Qayyum and Mahmood (2015) argues that social media provides a tremendous opportunity to reach out to people who may be unfamiliar with Islam or Muslims. Proselytisation by Islamic preachers (*Du'at*) is a significant use of social media in Islam. Regular Muslims utilize social media to communicate with one another. In the Muslim world, social media expands learning chances. Muslims use social media to share Quranic passages and *Ahadith*, attend lectures given by Islamic scholars, and possibly make contact with them if the necessity arises. Through social media, Muslims and non-Muslims can hear and watch sermons on Quranic and Sunnah teachings. While they recognize some harmful usage of social media, such as promoting crudity and sloppy comments, character assassination, and hate speech, all of which are prohibited in Islam, these scholars, however, urged using social media for constructive purposes, as advocated by the Qur'an and Sunnah.

In their examination of various cases of abuse of social media by selected Yoruba Muslim preachers and its implications for the Muslim ummah in Lagos state, Alawiye and Paramole (2022) submit that Yoruba Muslim preachers (*Du'at*) misuse social media by misrepresenting Islam as a result of a lack of knowledge, by verbally abusing rival scholars without restraint, by reacting to unverified information, and by using social media without restraint to pursue personal fame and favor. According to these scholars, the effects of social media abuse include a poor representation of Islam among non-Muslims, the abolition of Muslim brotherhood and unity, a rise in theological disagreements among

Muslims, a deterioration of Muslim faith, and the emergence of social conflicts among Muslims.

Similarly, Lawal and Dauda (2022), in their analysis of how some Islamic preachers in Yorubaland have utilized social media to promote religious proselytization, emphasize that social media have been utilized to propagate Islam through uploading of offline and live public lectures, Jumu'at khutbah (sermons), and inter-religious debates on YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook pages. Conversely, it was observed that these *Du'at* could not maintain decorum, balanced and methodological preaching. They therefore concluded that these preachers' *Da'wah* engagement did not follow the instructions of Allah and His noble Messenger (SAAW). Although, they have wisdom and knowledge but lacking fair preaching and could not convey their messages in a way that is better as divinely instructed. Most of them also lack patience, persuasion, perseverance and humility in the course of their proselytisation. The foregoing reveals that none of the reviewed literature specifically looks into the implications, impact, or effects of social media abuse for peaceful coexistence in Nigeria, let alone the Yorubaland.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. This design combines both qualitative and quantitative data to examine the effect of social media abuse by Muslim preachers (*Du'at*) on peaceful coexistence among the Yoruba communities. The population of the study was made up of all Muslims in Yorubaland. Yorubaland constitutes the states that are currently occupying the South-West geo-political zone, comprising Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, and Lagos states, as well as a substantial part of Kwara, Kogi, and Dahomey. Since the researcher could not find accurate figures on the population distribution according to religion, all literate adult Muslims were considered for this study. However, due to the large size of the population, fifty (50) respondents each were purposively selected from the nine (9) states/areas. This implies that 450 served as the sample size for the study. A validated questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection. The 450 copies of questionnaires were administered using Google digital form with closed-ended items. The collected data were analyzed using simple percentage statistics and frequency distribution tables. A personal observation technique was also adopted.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is concerned with the presentation, analysis and discussion of the results collected through the administered questionnaire. Out of 450 copies of the administered questionnaire, four hundred and fifteen (415), covering 92 percent of the sample size, were valid for statistical analysis.

**Research Question 1:** What are the forms of social media abuse by some Yoruba Muslim Preachers in the course of *Da'wah* engagement?

**Table 1. Forms of Social Media abuse by some Yoruba Muslim Preachers in the course of *Da'wah* engagement**

| Response                               | SA             | A              | D            | SD           | Total         |
|--|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Misinformation.                        | 219<br>(52.8%) | 161<br>(38.8%) | 24<br>(5.8%) | 11<br>(2.7%) | 415<br>(100%) |
| Hate speech.                           | 258<br>(62.2%) | 128<br>(30.8%) | 16<br>(3.9%) | 13<br>(3.1%) | 415<br>(100%) |
| Name-calling.                          | 227<br>(54.7%) | 144<br>(34.7%) | 20<br>(4.8%) | 24<br>(5.8%) | 415<br>(100%) |
| Condemnation of fellow Muslims.        | 226<br>(54.5%) | 139<br>(33.5%) | 18<br>(4.3%) | 32<br>(7.7%) | 415<br>(100%) |
| Declaring fellow Muslim as unbeliever. | 231<br>(55.7%) | 127<br>(30.6%) | 19<br>(4.6%) | 38<br>(9.2%) | 415<br>(100%) |
| Defamation of character.               | 218<br>(52.5%) | 133<br>(32%)   | 28<br>(6.7%) | 36<br>(8.7%) | 415<br>(100%) |

**Source: Field Survey, 2023.**

Table 1 shows the analysis of the respondent's responses on the forms of social media abuse by some Yoruba Muslim preachers. Out of the total respondents, 91.6% agreed that misinformation is one of the forms of social media abuse perpetrated by those preachers, while 8.4% disagreed. Also, 93% thought that hate speech was exhibited as a form of social media abuse by the preachers, but 7% thought otherwise. While 88% agreed that name-calling was one of the social media abuse by these preachers, 10% disagreed with this. Whereas 88% of the total respondents agreed on the condemnation of fellow Muslims, 12% disagreed. Equally, over 86% of respondents believed that some Yoruba Muslim Du'at declared some fellow Muslims as unbelievers, while little over 13% believed otherwise. Little above 84% of the total respondents agreed on defamation of character as a form of social media abuse by some Yoruba Muslim preachers, 15.4% declared otherwise. The foregoing findings imply that misinformation, hate speech, name-calling, condemnation of fellow Muslims, declaration of fellow Muslims as unbelievers, and

defamation of character were considered forms of social media abuse committed by some Yoruba Muslim preachers in the course of their *Da'wah* engagement.

**Research Question 2:** How has social media abuse by some Muslim preachers affected peaceful coexistence in Yorubaland?

**Table 2. Effects of Social Media abuse by some Muslim Preachers on Peaceful Coexistence in Yorubaland**

| Response   | SA             | A              | D             | SD            | Total         |
|--|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Constant hostility and confrontation.                  | 256<br>(61.7%) | 114<br>(27.5%) | 19<br>(4.6%)  | 26<br>(6.3%)  | 415<br>(100%) |
| Widening disunity among religious sects.               | 230<br>(55.4%) | 128<br>(30.8%) | 17<br>(4.2%)  | 40<br>(9.6%)  | 415<br>(100%) |
| Growing mistrust among Muslims.                        | 241<br>(58.1%) | 125<br>(30.1%) | 22<br>(5.3%)  | 27<br>(6.5%)  | 415<br>(100%) |
| Aggravating tensions, fear and intimidation.           | 262<br>(63.1%) | 109<br>(26.3%) | 25<br>(6%)    | 19<br>(4.6%)  | 415<br>(100%) |
| Intra-religious conflicts.                             | 226<br>(54.5%) | 105<br>(25.3%) | 34<br>(8.2%)  | 50<br>(12%)   | 415<br>(100%) |
| Intensifying Islamophobia (fear of Islam and Muslims). | 254<br>(61.2%) | 127<br>(30.6%) | 11<br>(2.7%)  | 23<br>(5.5%)  | 415<br>(100%) |
| Physical attacks and counter-attacks.                  | 219<br>(52.8%) | 109<br>(26.2%) | 36<br>(8.7%)  | 51<br>(12.3%) | 415<br>(100%) |
| Proliferation of religious extremists and thugs.       | 223<br>(53.7%) | 111<br>(26.7%) | 38<br>(9.2%)  | 43<br>(10.4%) | 415<br>(100%) |
| Arrest and Court injunctions.                          | 198<br>(47.7%) | 73<br>(17.6%)  | 60<br>(14.5%) | 84<br>(20.2%) | 415<br>(100%) |

**Source: Field Survey, 2023.**

Table 2 reveals the analysis of the respondent's responses on the effects of social media abuse by Muslim preachers on peaceful coexistence in Yorubaland. In this table, the majority of the respondents (89.2%) identified constant hostility and confrontation, 10.9% disagreed; 86.2% believed that social media abuse by Muslim preachers widens disunity among religious sects, while 13.8% believed otherwise; 88.2% identified growing mistrust among Muslims while 11.8% disagreed. Also, 89.4% supported that the abuse aggravates tensions, fear, and intimidation, and 10.6% disagreed. Whereas 79.8% believed that such abuse promotes intra-religious conflicts, 20.2% believed otherwise. As much as 91.8% insisted that social media abuse by Muslim preachers intensifies Islamophobia (fear of Islam and Muslims), 8.2% disagreed.

Moreover, 79% of the total respondents agreed that such abuse has led to physical attacks and counter-attacks on Muslim adherents, 21% disagreed. Over 79% thought such abuse was responsible for the proliferation of religious extremists and thugs. Above all,

little over 65% believed in arrest and court injunctions as one of the effects of social media abuse on peaceful coexistence in Yorubaland, while 34.7% considered otherwise.

The preceding findings imply that Yoruba Muslim preachers' abuse of social media has resulted in constant hostility and confrontation, disunity among religious sects, mistrust among Muslims, tensions among respective preachers' followers, intra-religious conflicts, Islamophobia (fear of Islam and Muslims), physical attacks and counter-attacks, the proliferation of religious extremists and thugs, and property destruction. It is also observed that while early Islamic scholars who spread Islam to the general public advocated strongly for religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence, contemporary *Da'wah* propagators have little to no consideration for these critical components. As a result, non-Muslims are questioning Islamic scholars' understanding of *Da'wah* propagation, the feasibility of their messages, and even the degree of religious tolerance in Islam.

## CONCLUSION

From the previous analysis, this study submits that those Yoruba Muslim preachers (*Du'at*) who abuse social media in the course of *Da'wah* have not adhered to certain Islamic ethics and principles that could ensure responsible and effective *Da'wah* propagation capable of promoting peaceful coexistence. *Da'wah* is expected to be conducted in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Glorious Qur'an and by the noble Prophet (SAAW). The divine instruction on *Da'wah* methodology is stipulated in the Glorious Qur'an thus:

Invite (mankind, O Muhammad) to the Way of your Lord (i.e., Islam) with wisdom and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better. Truly, your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His Path, and He is the Best Aware of those who are guided (Qur'an 16:125).

The above Qur'anic verse enjoins those who engage in *Da'wah* to possess wisdom (*hikmah*), fair preaching (*maw'izatil-hasanat*), and conveying the message of Islam in a way that is better (*al-jidal bil-lati hiya ahsan*). Prophetic traditions equally emphasize that every *Da'i* is expected to possess such qualities as logic of reasoning, patience, persuasion, perseverance, humility, balanced preaching, and sound knowledge of the Qur'an and *Ahadith*. However, social media have been employed by these *Du'at* to promote misinformation, hate speech, name-calling, condemnation of fellow Muslims, and defamation of character, which have primarily resulted in constant hostility and

confrontation, disunity, mistrust, tensions, fear and intimidation, Islamophobia, etc. The study therefore concludes that the abuse of social media by Yoruba Muslim preachers (*Du'at*) have had significant negative effects on peaceful coexistence among Yoruba communities.

Based on the foregoing conclusions, this study recommends that contemporary *Du'at* in Yorubaland ensure that their online *Da'wah* adheres to the Islamic framework and principles of the *Da'wah* technique that promotes peace, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. The *Du'at* must gain excellent understanding and training in *Da'wah* operations. Training Muslim preachers is critical to guaranteeing the successful spread of Islamic teachings and establishing a balanced connection with the audience on social media. Such training programs should strive to provide preachers with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to successfully express Islamic teachings, address modern world concerns, and guide the Muslim ummah in the best way possible.

In addition, *Du'at* should learn to use persuasive and logical arguments to transmit the message of Islam to build understanding and promote dialogue. They should engage in constructive conversations rather than confrontations or spreading enmity, identify and accept the diversity of viewpoints and backgrounds, and respect others' perspectives, even if they differ from their own. It is also critical that the *Du'at* preserve Islamic ethical values in all of their online interactions, such as refraining from abusive language, personal assaults, and gossip and promoting religious tolerance. Furthermore, they should look for ways to use their positions, knowledge, and teaching to develop a sense of oneness among Muslims in Yorubaland. By adhering to these principles, individual *Da'i* can use social media responsibly for *Da'wah*, contributing to the positive representation of Islam and inviting others to explore its teachings in a respectful and meaningful way.

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