

The Dynamics of Communication Networks of Islamic Preaching Organizations in the New Media Era: A Review of the Phenomenon of Digital Preaching Trendsetters

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Abstract: The digital era has created a completely different way for religious messages to be distributed which has transformed the operation of da'wah authority. The system evolved from traditional institutional frameworks to contemporary virtual networks which individual users created. This research investigates how digital da'wah trendsetters use organizational communication network theory to study their activities within new media environments. Through a literature review this study wants to reconceptualize the structure of da'wah organizations that are no longer held back by institutional walls which is a boundaryless organization but instead are controlled by algorithms and the node centrality of a trendsetter. The conceptual findings show that trendsetters on social media like YouTube and Instagram and TikTok actually function as Top Management in a virtual organization! The followers in this arrangement function as subordinates who willingly choose to reproduce and distribute and validate the da'wah messages. This dynamic creates a flow of information that is just massive and it is vulnerable to algorithmic bias and the fragmentation of religious authority. This article provides a conceptual synthesis that positions *da'wah* social media accounts as more than just media channels. The social media accounts function as an organizational communication ecosystem which has its own organizational structure that operates through hidden power dynamics and organizational culture.

Keywords: *Digital Da'wah*, Communication Network, Organizational Communication, New Media, Trendsetter

Introduction

The development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes to the patterns of dissemination and reception of religious messages among Muslims. Da'wah authority used to be controlled by formal religious institutions and Islamic boarding schools and Islamic organizations which had rigid hierarchical systems but now digital media introduces new decentralized religious authority systems. Social media provides a platform for people and organizations to create and share religious knowledge which they can access without needing traditional authority systems. Digital platforms have created a new method through which religious authority establishes legitimacy because da'wah professionals must now prove their worth by building digital

presence and showing trustworthiness and creating audience connections in online platforms.

Digital media expansion brought about complete control shift in religious authority. In the digital da'wah ecosystem the legitimacy of authority no longer depends solely on institutional affiliation or structured scientific chains of transmission because authority now depends on actors' ability to create visibility and handle audience interaction and use social media platform algorithms. Content reach and user engagement and popularity serve as essential elements which determine fresh religious authority creation in digital environments as established by Fuadi (2025) and Hidayatullah (2024).

The digitalization of Islamic preaching has produced new religious influencers who function as digital preachers and gain power through social media platforms. The religious communication center has moved from traditional Islamic preaching places to online platforms which permit faster and wider distribution of religious content. Social media functions as both a platform for Islamic preaching delivery and a space where digital preachers build their popularity and authority ([Baidawi, 2025](#); [Febrian, 2024](#)).

The academic study of da'wah practice in modern media research has concentrated on three main areas which include media impacts, religious practices as commodities, and the analysis of digital platforms which show da'wah content. The research still lacks sufficient focus on how religious authority gets negotiated and how audiences interact and how digital platform users establish relationships with each other ([Mudhofi et al., 2024](#); [Nawaf, 2025](#)). The digital da'wah movement establishes itself as a new kind of virtual organization without geographical limits which functions under control because its members create content and its algorithmic systems interact with audiences who live in different places. Digital da'wah studies currently lack this point of view which provides an essential opportunity for theoretical [growth](#) ([Nawaffani et al., 2026](#); [Zaenuri, 2024](#)). The organization operates like a global corporation because it develops information and creates value while achieving structured progress in decreasing uncertainty which exists in its operations.

The research seeks to examine digital preachers through Organizational Communication Network Theory as its analytical framework. The growing use of social media platforms enables new methods to distribute Islam because digital networks now connect individual preachers as main distribution points. The research utilizes this theoretical framework to study the methods through which preachers establish and operate their digital communication systems. The research identifies three key elements which include invisible hierarchical structures, methods used to share information, ways in which viewers participate and power distribution between members of the network. The article investigates how algorithmic systems and platform characteristics control religious message distribution and establish dominance for specific online participants. The research examines these systems to discover modern digital da'wah methods and establish a new academic framework for studying Islamic Communication and Broadcasting in the current age of widespread digital religious practice through interconnected networks and online public spaces.

Methodology

This study uses a library research method with a qualitative conceptual literature review design, where data is obtained from various recent scientific literature and analyzed through a process of reduction, categorization, and interpretive theoretical synthesis to build new conceptual constructions without being tied to direct empirical data, thus in accordance with the character of qualitative research that emphasizes in-depth meaning and analysis of texts ([Fadli, 2021](#); [Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021](#); [Guntur, 2019](#)).

Result and Discussion

Construction of Virtual Organizations in the Digital Da'wah Ecosystem

The development of social media has shifted the classic paradigm of organizational communication, which views organizations as static entities based on formal structures, toward a dynamic, process-based concept of digital organizations. Organizing practices occur continuously through the production of meaning within social media networks, allowing individual accounts such as trendsetters to be understood as forms of virtual organizations, according to Weick ([Leonardi, 2021](#); [Cristofaro, 2022](#)).

Within the digital *da'wah* ecosystem, *da'wah* content on TikTok and Instagram serves as a sensemaking mechanism that helps audiences interpret contemporary religious issues, while influencers, media management teams, and followers form a virtual organizational network that collaboratively reproduces and expands the reach of *da'wah* messages in the Society 5.0 era ([Afrijaludin et al., 2025](#); [Mendelson, 2023](#); [Muzayana, 2022](#); [Nisfah et al., 2025](#)).

Trendsetter as Central Node: Network Centrality Analysis

In social media-based virtual organizations, the effectiveness of trendsetter leadership is determined by its central position in the communication network, namely through the ability to reach a wide audience (degree centrality), become a strategic information connector (betweenness centrality), and build psychological closeness with followers through parasocial interactions (closeness centrality) ([Balaban et al., 2022](#); [Bhattacharya, 2023](#); [Stein et al., 2022](#); [Zhou et al., 2024](#)).

Algorithmic Hegemony in Islamic Communication Networks

In the digital *da'wah* ecosystem, message visibility is no longer entirely determined by religious authority, but rather by the logic of platform algorithms that direct creators to tailor content to gain engagement, potentially shifting *da'wah* from a spiritual transformation process to a digital attention commodity ([Duffy & Meisner, 2023](#); [Liang et al., 2025](#); [Scalvini, 2023](#); [Su & Kaye, 2023](#)).

Genealogy of Authority Shift: From Structural Authority to Cyber Network Capillarity

The transformation of digital *da'wah* has shifted the structure of religious authority from an institutional-hierarchical model to networked authority, namely a form of legitimacy built through platform visibility, audience interaction, and actor capacity in managing digital communication networks ([Bellar et al., 2023](#); [Muzayana, 2022](#); [Evolvi, 2022](#)).

Anatomy of a Virtual Islamic Organization: Analyzing the Relationship between Prosumers, Creative Teams, and Attention Capital

The Organizational Communication Theory framework enables researchers to analyze how social media *da'wah* activities function as a unified digital network system which operates beyond individual user actions. The phenomenon shows similarity to platform-based organizations which create digital ecosystems that separate their users from their technology and their user communities. Kraus et al. (2022) explain that digital organizations today implement flexible organizational systems which enable employees to work together without having physical contact while creating value through internal and external digital platform connections. A preacher uses social media to create an organizational hub for digital *da'wah* because it connects people and resources through a networked communication system.

The virtual organization employs a specific professional framework which establishes distinct roles for its workforce. The creative team oversees the complete process of creating messages which includes developing scripts and visual materials and conducting content editing and distribution work across multiple social media channels. The presence of these various roles demonstrates that the success of digital *da'wah* is determined not only by the personal capacity of the preacher, but also by the effectiveness of the collective work system that supports them. The preacher functions as a dual role by providing authentic religious authority through his work and guiding the audience through his preaching. The study by Casaló et al. (2020) shows that an influencer's social media power depends on their trustworthiness and physical appeal and their capacity to create connections with their audience. The digital preacher role combines elements from three different organizational functions which include brand representation and leadership and digital authority functions.

The external organizational environment shows that followers move beyond their traditional role as passive audiences who consume mass media according to standard communication models. They actively engage in message production and distribution and message expansion through their activities which include liking and commenting and sharing content and creating new *da'wah* material formats. The presence of these attributes establishes a participatory culture which enables digital networks to spread messages at an explosive rate. Research on social network structures demonstrates that digital platform inter-node relationships create systems which enable fast information dissemination through their numerous interconnected paths ([Wang et al., 2023](#)). The degree of psychological involvement and user experience alters how users engage with digital content

which leads to their ongoing participation in virtual communities ([Reer et al., 2022](#)). The success of digital *da'wah* depends on two factors which include the message quality and the ability of the virtual organization to control audience engagement as the main method for disseminating religious content.

Network Centrality Matrix: A Theoretical Application in Conceptualizing Digital Audiences

The Communication Network Theory establishes that organizational success depends on two factors which include an actor's position within network frameworks and their capacity to manage information distribution. In the digital *da'wah* ecosystem, trendsetters occupy a central position, demonstrated by high degree centrality, which is the number of direct connections they have with their audience through followers, subscribers, and content viewers. Digital preachers who hold this position become opinion leaders because they can deliver messages to multiple people at once and across different locations without any obstacles from distance or administrative processes. The high betweenness centrality score enables them to function as information brokers who connect intricate Islamic knowledge sources with digital society requirements for brief and relevant and comprehensible information ([Casaló et al., 2020](#); [Wang et al., 2023](#)).

The success of trendsetters to keep their power depends on their ability to build close relationships with their supporters through the usage of closeness centrality. Social media platforms enable users to experience direct contact with preachers through their live streaming shows and commenting features which enable two-sided communication. The digital media interaction creates a situation where people establish a false sense of personal relationship through their online contact. The audience develops psychological closeness which enhances their trust and loyalty to the digital missionary network's values because this psychological connection leads to sustained online influence through the network's organizational strength ([Stein et al., 2024](#)).

The Invisible CEO: Algorithmic Management and the Theological Compromise of Digital Space

Digital *da'wah* organizations function through voluntary participation and democratic participation but use digital platforms to manage their communication systems through algorithm-based management systems. The algorithms in this system act as management tools which establish how messages will be transmitted and shown to users without requiring their active participation. Duffy and Meisner (2023) demonstrate that content creators rely heavily on algorithmic systems to gain public exposure while Stark and Pais (2021) explain that algorithms have evolved into management instruments that regulate actor behavior through performance measurement and the automatic distribution of opportunities. The virtual organizations use their communication systems to operate through two elements which include *da'wah* activities and audience contact but their platform algorithms operate through hidden mechanisms.

Algorithms function according to attention economy rules which favor content that achieves high user engagement through comments and shares and watch time. Algorithm-based media creates a new information system which produces and shares information according to user attention values, which Liang (2022) describes as the first material. Digital preachers must update their preaching methods because they need to produce content that attracts viewers through appealing titles and impressive visuals and straightforward explanations of difficult concepts. Nurwahid and Setiawan (2022) state that online platforms distribute content based on audience engagement and shareability which causes religious messages to become disconnected because content distribution depends on audience engagement.

The Dialectic of Hyperreality and the Sensemaking of the Ummah in the Post-Truth Era

The expansion of digital *da'wah* has reshaped the way religious life is experienced, placing it within an increasingly mediated digital landscape. In this setting, individuals engage with religion through technological platforms, visual symbols, and a continuous flow of online content. Religious messages circulating on social media are often not direct reflections of lived religious practices; rather, they are carefully curated representations that have been edited, stylized, and adapted to attract the attention of digital audiences. As noted by Evolvi (2022), online religious engagement emerges within hyper-mediated environments where virtual and physical experiences frequently intersect. Similarly, Morris (2021) argues that social media platforms intensify the production of simulacra, allowing digital representations to appear more authentic and persuasive than the realities they claim to portray.

Within these digital spaces, public expressions of religiosity are increasingly influenced by visibility, aesthetic presentation, and performative engagement. The ways in which audiences interpret religious messages are shaped by changing patterns of meaning-making in online environments. As access to religious information becomes more widespread and traditional structures of authority lose some of their influence, users tend to gravitate toward content that is readily available, emotionally compelling, and socially endorsed. Consequently, assessments of credibility are often based less on scholarly expertise or the strength of an argument and more on indicators such as views, likes, shares, and comments. Serrano-Puche (2021) highlights the central role of emotions in this process, suggesting that emotional resonance and social validation frequently guide what people accept as true and subsequently share with others, sometimes outweighing careful evaluation of the message itself.

Conclusion

The dynamics of *da'wah* communication in the new media era have transcended the boundaries of media instruments, moving far toward a fundamental transformation of the organizational structure of Islam. Through the theoretical deconstruction conducted in this literature study, it can be concluded that the trendsetting phenomenon of digital *da'wah* can no longer be viewed as merely a personal communication activity, but rather a

manifestation of a Virtual Organization model that operates precisely, elastically, and without limits.

In this cyber network design, the *da'wah* occupies a central position as the Central Node, monopolizing three strategic dimensions of network centrality: degree centrality for instantly expanding ideological reach, betweenness centrality as a theological information broker who simplifies sacred texts for the lay public, and proximity centrality for building parasocial interaction bonds that erode the rigidity of classical religious bureaucratic hierarchies. The process of organizing religious meaning (sensemaking) among the community is now undergoing a radical shift from formal institutions to personal platforms, solidifying the dominance of network authority over traditional structural authority. However, the existence of this cyber organization is faced with ontological vulnerability due to the hegemony of commercial algorithmic management that acts as an invisible supreme leader, which often dictates and reduces the sacredness of the substance of religious messages for the sake of capitalizing on digital attention

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