

Mediating Algorithm Mediating Da'wa: The New Preacher and Optimization of Social Media for Da'wa in the Case of Habib Ja'far

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Abstract:

In the digital age, Islamic preaching (da'wa) has increasingly shifted to online platforms, however, concerns persist regarding the depth and credibility of social media-based da'wa, often perceived as superficial and lacking religious authority. This study investigates the case of Habib Husein Ja'far Al-Hadar, a traditionally trained Hadhrami preacher, who has emerged as a prominent digital da'i through his strategic and effective use of Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube. The research aims to explore how algorithmic logic, media constraints, and digital culture shape and potentially enhance the reach and substance of da'wa in contemporary Indonesia. Anchored in digital ethnography and qualitative content analysis, the study draws upon online observations and platform analytics to examine how Habib Ja'far optimizes message delivery across social media, navigating technical limitations to convey inclusive, youth-oriented Islamic messages. Findings reveal that beyond religious qualifications, digital fluency—understanding algorithms, audience behavior, and platform affordances—is essential to successful digital da'wa. Habib Ja'far's approach demonstrates how algorithmic literacy and creative communication can challenge the dichotomy between traditional and modern religious authority. This research contributes to broader discussions on mediatized religion, digital religious authority, and the transformation of Islamic communication in the algorithmic age.

Keywords: Digital Da'wa, Religious Authority, Social Media, Algorithm, Islamic Communication

INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of digital technologies has profoundly transformed the production, dissemination, and consumption of religious message. In contemporary Indonesia, digital platforms have become a dominant arena for da'wa, giving rise to new religious actors, practices, and authorities. Young Muslim preachers—often without traditional religious qualifications—now populate Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter, reshaping the landscape of Islamic communication (Nisa, 2018). This digital expansion has created both unprecedented opportunities and significant challenges. Although online platforms offer wider reach and faster dissemination, they risk trivializing

religious content and undermining traditional forms of religious authority (Hjarvard, 2011). In this context, da'wa is no longer limited to mosques or religious gatherings but permeates everyday life through smartphones and apps (Horst & Miller, 2012), demanding a new theoretical and empirical inquiry into the algorithmic mediation of Islamic preaching.

Da'wa's migration into digital spaces has disrupted conventional norms surrounding religious legitimacy and authority. This phenomenon reflects broader transformations in the relationship between media and religion, in which digital technologies not only serve as neutral channels but also actively shape religious experiences, performances, and subjectivities (Hjarvard, 2011; Lim, 2009). Social media, in particular, has allowed Islamic influencers to claim authority through aesthetic appeal, affective intimacy, and technological proficiency rather than theological training. As Indonesian Muslims increasingly consume da'wa content online, preachers now navigate a mediatized religious field in which the metrics of popularity—views, likes, followers—replace scholarly authority. These transformations raise urgent questions regarding the nature of da'wa in the algorithmic age and the evolving interplay between religious authority, technological mediation, and cultural consumption.

Recent literature has highlighted the creativity of youth-driven Islamic content on social media, particularly in relation to the hijrah movement, ethical self-fashioning, and soft da'wa aesthetics (Nisa, 2018). Studies such as Wai Weng (2018) have explored how preachers like Felix Siauw use visual persuasion to spread ideological messages. However, these studies often frame digital da'wa as shallow, image-driven, and detached from traditional religious scholarship. They fail to sufficiently account for the technical and algorithmic constraints of digital platforms and how such constraints shape the form, content, and reach of da'wa. Moreover, they overlook cases where preachers with formal Islamic education engage deeply with digital logics. This article addresses this gap by examining how a traditionally trained preacher—Habib Husein Ja'far—optimizes da'wa through digital infrastructures, thereby reconfiguring the relationship between religious authority and algorithmic mediation.

In order to analyze this transformation, the study is grounded in media and religion theory, particularly the concept of mediatization, which emphasizes how media logics restructure religious practices (Hjarvard, 2011). It also draws from McLuhan's media ecology framework to explore how the form of communication conditions the message (Batubara, 2014). The study engages with the notion of "mediated intimacy" (Slama, 2017), illustrating how digital da'wa cultivates emotional proximity between preachers and followers. Furthermore, algorithmic governance theory is used to understand how social media's operational codes—ranking systems, hashtags, and SEO—shape religious visibility and engagement. These theoretical perspectives help unpack how religious meaning is not only communicated but co-constructed through digital infrastructures.

This article aims to explore how a preacher with formal religious qualifications utilizes and adapts to algorithmic logic and platform constraints to conduct da'wa effectively across multiple social media platforms. Using the case of Habib Husein Ja'far, the study interrogates the binary between "authentic" and "superficial" da'wa and examines how digital-savvy preachers with theological training contest such dichotomies. The research contributes to the growing scholarship on Islamic communication by bridging the gap between religious authority and digital infrastructure studies. More specifically, it offers an empirically grounded understanding of how algorithmic literacy can serve as a new form of religious capital in the digital age.

This article argues that social media da'wa is not inherently superficial or contentless, but that its depth and impact are conditioned by the preacher's ability to navigate the logics of platform algorithms. The central question is: how does a preacher like Habib Ja'far, who possesses religious qualifications, strategically optimize his da'wa within the limitations and affordances of digital platforms? Supporting data show that Habib Ja'far has amassed over one million followers across platforms, notably on YouTube ("Jeda Nulis"), Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. His use of segmentation, hashtag strategies, cross-platform linking, and audience interaction exemplifies an advanced understanding of platform dynamics. These practices challenge the notion that algorithm-driven da'wa necessarily undermines religious depth.

This study highlights the emergence of a new preacher archetype—one who bridges religious expertise with algorithmic mastery. By focusing on a case that departs from the typical profile of the digital preacher, the article demonstrates how traditional authority can be rearticulated through modern media. The findings have broader implications for scholars of religion, media practitioners, and policymakers concerned with digital literacy, radicalization, and religious education. In a time when algorithmic systems increasingly mediate religious experience, understanding how preachers adapt to these systems is vital for reimagining Islamic communication and authority in the digital age.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transforming Authority: Between Pre-Digital and Digital Da'wa

Da'wa is the most common term to define the activities relates to preaching delivered by Muslim scholars. The conventional model of da'wa is conveying religious messages or advices oratorically, face to face with the audiences (Basit, 2013). Usually, this activity happens at certain places such as mosque, *majelis taklim*, *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), and other religious institutions (Burhanuddin, 2004). Since da'wa is one way for Muslim scholars to gain authority (Feillard, 2010), this activity continues to undergo transformation from time to time according to the context and trends that arise in society. At the beginning, the actors of da'wa were dominated by *Ulama* (Muslim scholar with strong roots in Islamic education) (Nisa, 2018), delivered orally on Friday sermons or any religious gatherings (Feillard, 2010), requiring a specific place (Burhanuddin, 2004), and the popularity of preacher is measured based on expertise on Islamic knowledge and the ability to answer the question on religious matters from society (Kaptein, 2004).

It is undeniable that the role of technology (in a broad sense) linked to the development of human civilization. The long history of humans is always interpreted through technological developments in their time. For instance, the people who use stones as life aids are referred to as Stone Age people, as well as the Bronze Age, Iron Age, and up to the present, what we now call the digital era. From this we can see that the development of human civilization is always related to the technology used by human. Likewise, in the context of the spread of religion, technology is often the gateway for religious missionaries to enter and spread their religious thought. This is as stated by Lim on his introduction about charismatic technology in the late 18th century. Christian missionaries benefited from the entry of trading ships among important centers surrounding the Indian Ocean and the South China. This is similar to the process of Islam's entry into Indonesia, according to most anthropologists, through trade routes (Lim, 2009).

This phenomenon also occurs in the realm of da'wah, with the emergence of internet cafes in 1996 marking the beginning of greater internet access for Indonesian society. Indonesian Muslim use the internet to seek religious advice, fatwa, and matters related to religious affairs, referred to as phenomena of "shopping fatwa" and "googling a Kiai" (Hosen, 2008). Apart from the ease of accessing all information including religious content, the internet also facilitates anyone's access to a wide range of topics, including religion. Da'wa, which was previously conveyed by Ulama (Muslim scholars) regarding Islamic knowledge, has transformed with the arrival of social media. Now anything that contains goodness is referred to as da'wa.

Unlike previous da'wa, the actors of digital da'wa are mostly Muslim youth, digital native, many of whom do not come from traditional Islamic boarding school background. They conduct da'wa by creatively using social media to present their religious agenda with youthful taste and expressions that resonate with youth culture (Nisa, 2018). In addition, the da'wa that is carried out is not limited to oratory or monologue from the preacher to the audience. This kind of da'wa offers various models that are creatively packaged, including visual forms such as videos, podcasts, memes, comics and animation (Wai Weng, 2018). The more creative and attractive the da'wa content, the greater engagement the preacher receives.

Slama argues that digital platforms have helped form "mediated intimacy" between Islamic preachers and their followers, where preachers use digital communication apps to directly contact their followers and introduce them to contemporary, affective concepts to promote the everyday embodiment of Islamic piety. Slama focuses his analysis on the idea of "filling" the heart," a popular concept used by preachers and their followers to characterize their intimate personal da'wah engagements, where direct communication is itself considered an act of manifesting piety (Slama, 2017). This highlights the power of digital platforms in expanding the influence of forums and da'wa figures in Indonesia, with the internet enabling them to promote religious teachings on a mass scale and connect more intimately with a wider audience. Moreover, one of the conveniences provided by the digital world into the da'wa sphere is the ability to conduct da'wa anywhere and anytime, without the need for a specific place or time. However, unlike conventional da'wa, the popularity in digital da'wa is not measured by expertise in Islamic knowledge but by the number of followers. This phenomenon has led to the fragmentation of the da'wa sphere and the emergence of new religious authorities, such as celebrity ustadz, influencer ustadz, and social media preacher (Akmaliah, 2020).

The virtual da'wa activism also challenges traditional authority. Based on research conducted by Noorhaidi, young people born in the last 25 years are very close to digital culture (Hasan, 2018). In addition, these millennial generations, particularly students, are vulnerable to exposure to radicalism, extremism, and terrorism that are not only dispersed through the digital world but also through the literature they consumed, both in the context of formal education and popular reading. The ideology of Islamism embraced in books and religious reading material is widespread among students. Millennial generations are more vulnerable to the ideology of extreme or radical Islamism found in textbooks. The rise of religious content in social media is also very influential on the development of Muslim generations. The impact can be seen in the last two years, where the Muslim community has been involved in political issues largely disseminated through social media. Da'wa on social media also creates a new habitus of the Indonesian Muslims, namely the tendency of go

beyond boundaries. In this sense, Muslims (social media users) have autonomous authority in determining their religious preferences and political choices (Said, 2020).

Husein Ja'far and His Style of Da'wa

Husein Ja'far Al Hadar, well known as Habib Husein, is a writer, academic and also a preacher whose popularity has recently increased among the Indonesian people due to his active promotion of peaceful Islam on his social media account. He was born in June 21, 1998, in Bondowoso, East Java. Husein Ja'far was organically educated on traditional Islamic background. After completing his junior and senior high school in Bondowoso, he continued his studies at the Al-Ma'had Al-Islami Islamic Boarding School in Bangil, East Java, before graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Islamic Philosophy from the State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, majoring in Islamic Faith and Philosophy. In 2020, he earned his master's degree in Quranic Studies from the same university. Habib Ja'far is also the author of Islamic books published by Gramedia & Mizan, a writer for the mass media outlets on Islam, and a speaker on Islam on several national TV channels (n.d.). Unlike others Habib preacher who uses Arabic attributes, such as a turban and robe, Habib Husein has a distinctive appearance, wearing a t-shirt, jeans, and a white cap. According to him, conveying Islam in a relaxed and flexible way must begin by eliminating any distance between the preacher and the audience, including in terms of style and presentation (Ja'far, 2022b).

Promoting Islam as Religion of Love

The task of a preacher is to deliver good news to humanity. Islam came to convey glad tidings, not sorrow or fear. Islam makes things easy for its people, not difficult. In the video entitled *How to Preach Like the Prophet*, Habib Husein gave an example of a time when Islam had not yet arrived: women were treated merely as objects, without proper recognition. Afterward, Islam came and raised the status of women, making them equal to men. Appointed Bilal Bin Rabbah, a minority, as a *muazzin* (the person elected to call the prayer in the mosque). However, what often happens now is that Islam, in its truest form, is perceived as exclusive, using violence and spreading fear (Ja'far, 2018a). According to Habib Husein, there are two categories of preaching: first, those who preach to people who are already Muslim; second, those who preach to Muslims who practice Islam only formally, as well as those who are not yet Muslim. Habib Husein positioned himself as a preacher to the second group. He spreads the teachings of Islam not only through recitation and on the pulpit but also engaging closely with those who wish to learn about religion, positioning himself as an equal to them and avoiding any patronizing behavior. He seeks to understand the position of those who wish to learn Islamic teachings, regardless of their background (Ja'far, 2022a).

Tolerance in Islam

In the video, entitled *Becoming a Muslim Minority in Europe*, the speakers are Gita Savitri and Paulus Partohap, who currently live in Germany. They talk about how they live in Germany as a minority because they are Muslims. The main key is mutual tolerance and respect for each other's religions. Living in Indonesia as a Muslim is a luxury, as being the majority provides many facilities for carrying out worship. However, abroad, especially in countries where majority of the population is not Muslim, one must struggle to find a decent place to worship. According to Habib Husein, a good generation of Muslims idolizes intellectuals, Muslims who are modernist, Islamic, and also active in a social sphere. This is due to the fact that, before being called Muslims, they were first called human beings (Ja'far, 2019a). The attitude of tolerance was also evident when Habib Husein discussed tolerance

with stand-up comedians Coki Pardede and Tretan Muslims during the month of Ramadan. Coki, a Christian, asked about fasting. Habib explained that fasting is not only practiced in Islam but has existed since the time of the Prophet Adam. Even in other religions, fasting is observed, though the procedures differ. This can serve as the basis for interreligious tolerance. Furthermore, it is not permissible to force stalls to close during the day in Ramadan to respect the fasting Muslims, as the fasting Muslims must also respect those who are not fasting (Ja'far, 2018b). Hearing Habib Husein's explanation allowed Coki Pardede to gain new knowledge regarding Islam, which is why he felt comfortable when conversing with Habib Husein.

Making Da'wa Easy and Simple

Conveying the truth of religion (da'wa) essentially involves inviting others, as Gus Mus suggests, in a manner that should be no worse than the way a bus driver invites passengers. It should be done in a good way, beautiful way, not in harmful manner or with violence. Even when Prophet Muhammad invited people to Islam with kindness, many still opposed him. The duty of a *da'i* (preacher) is to convey the message; after that, it is up to the *mad'u* (audience) to accept or reject it. During the time of Prophet Muhammad, people were drawn to Islam not merely by words but by his exemplary behavior and character. As stated in a Hadith: "A good Muslim is one whose right and left neighbors are not disturbed by his hands or his tongue." Faith is not developed in a short period but through a long process of contemplation. If everything is instant, then the effect is also temporary and does not last long. In reality, noble character is not static but dynamic, as it continuously manifests in human actions and interactions within the broader context of life. According to Habib Ja'far, the most essential characteristic of a preacher is demonstrating good morality, especially toward those who lack moral values. A preacher must set a positive example and provide accurate information that Islamic teachings promote goodness. This aligns with the example of Prophet Muhammad, who was spat on and hated by the Quraish disbelievers but never responded with hatred or violence. As the majority religious group in Indonesia, Muslims should protect minorities rather than seek privileges or oppress them. Good moral character significantly influences the quality of worship. Engaging in acts of worship while possessing poor moral traits—such as oppressing others, lying, deceiving, or betraying—renders one's religious deeds meaningless (Ja'far, 2019b).

In the Qur'an, Allah not only mentions that Islam is the true religion in His sight but also emphasizes the importance of continuously seeking His guidance, remaining humble, and persistently searching for the truth. When Habib Ja'far conversed with musician Vikri Rasta, he stated that preaching (da'wa) can be conducted through various media, including music. There is a common misconception that music is entirely forbidden (haram) in Islam. However, music can serve as an effective medium for da'wa. Unfortunately, some musicians who originally had a platform in the music industry chose to abandon it entirely when they decided to engage in preaching. Ideally, they could have utilized their existing platform to spread their message instead (Ja'far, 2019c). Migration (hijrah) in the religious sense is indeed a step toward self-improvement. However, this does not imply that everything before the migration was inherently wrong. One of the reasons certain da'wa videos attract significant viewership is their ability to convey messages in a manner that is accessible and easy to understand. When engaging with individuals from diverse backgrounds, Habib Ja'far strives to understand their perspectives. He adopts an approach that aligns with the background of

the informant. Furthermore, he does not hesitate to visit new places and adapt his attire to ensure comfortable communication, minimizing any sense of intimidation.

Mediating Da'wa with Algorithm, Logic, and Technical Limitation of Social Media

Since media has become an inseparable part of people's lives today, a popular preacher (*da'i*) must equip himself with effective communication skills and a well-planned media strategy. In other words, beyond possessing knowledge and substance, presentation and appearance are also inseparable aspects of the growing Islamic da'wa sector in Indonesia. Various forms of media and are shaped by different Muslim discourses, practices, and figures. While electronic media such as television and radio initially gave rise to celebrity preachers, social media platforms like TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube now offer additional pathways to gaining popularity. In this context, taking Habib Ja'far as a model of da'wa, we can observe that the more skilled a preacher is in utilizing social media algorithms, the greater their influence on society.

Habib Ja'far recognizes that society's deep attachment to social media provides significant advantages for the spread of Islamic da'wa. Actively utilizing social media as a platform for preaching, he established the Jeda Nulis account, believing that conventional methods of da'wa are no longer as effective. However, a new challenge emerged when YouTube was not only used by Habib Ja'far but also by other individuals and groups as a medium for ideological dissemination. As a response, he strategically tailored his da'wa content to directly target the younger generation. This segmentation approach aims to attract young audiences who are already engaged with YouTube to his channel, Jeda Nulis. According to McLuhan, media serve as extensions of human senses, enabling individuals to be influenced by information; thus, people utilize any available medium to communicate (Batubara, 2014). In line with this perspective, Habib Ja'far employs various media strategies to captivate younger audiences, including adopting youth-oriented attire, using contemporary slang, and fostering a relatable persona. Additionally, he extensively studied and optimized social media algorithms, particularly YouTube's, to maximize the reach of his content. The YouTube algorithm plays a crucial role in determining video visibility and engagement. By effectively leveraging this system, Habib Ja'far successfully increased viewership on his YouTube channel, Jeda Nulis, which has experienced significant audience growth.

Using the Right Keyword or Hashtag

Keywords are an essential component of YouTube's Search Engine Optimization (SEO), ensuring that videos appear in recommendations on the platform's main page. Before viewers are familiar with a channel's name, keywords serve as the primary tool for making videos easily discoverable. Once a channel establishes a dedicated community of viewers or fans, they tend to search for the channel's name directly (Araghadana, 2021). However, in his video uploads, Habib Ja'far does not rely on conventional keywords but instead utilizes the hashtag #KultumPemudaTersesat. The use of hashtags allows viewers to find videos easily when searching for specific hashtags.

Habib Ja'far demonstrated this by utilizing the Google Chrome application as a research tool to analyze videos embedded with YouTube tags. The results showed that his videos did not contain conventional keywords or tags.

Consistent in Uploading Content

Consistently uploading video content is a strategic step to optimize YouTube's algorithm, increasing the likelihood of achieving high view counts on each video. Maintaining

a regular upload schedule and consistent thematic focus helps establish strong branding, making the content more appealing and memorable to viewers (Wijayanti, 2020). In line with this, Habib Ja'far consistently produces and uploads videos with a consistent thematic approach. The impact of consistently uploading content with a specific thematic focus includes:

1. The Jeda Nulis channel is perceived by YouTube users as a credible channel because it consistently focuses on a single theme.
2. The Jeda Nulis channel serves as a reference point for discussions on da'wa in the digital era.
3. YouTube recognizes Habib Ja'far's name, the Kultum Pemuda Tersesat content, and the Jeda Nulis channel as keywords.
4. Viewers can explore additional video content from the Jeda Nulis channel, thereby increasing engagement with other videos.
5. YouTube includes Jeda Nulis content in the "Best of YouTube" section, leading to greater visibility and recommendations to attract more viewers.

Interactive with Viewers or Subscribers

Interacting with viewers or subscribers is essential for maintaining strong relationships with the audience. This engagement indirectly allows new viewers to perceive the positive aspects of a content creator's interactions (Wijayanti, 2020). Habib Ja'far engages with his audience verbally through video content, encouraging them to ask questions through the comments section or other social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter. Notably, he avoids advertising his da'wa content, ensuring that viewers can enjoy his videos without interruptions. Additionally, inviting viewers to leave comments or expressing apologies regarding the use of music enhances a sense of appreciation and involvement, making them feel valued and acknowledged. Habib Ja'far's approach aligns with Slama's (2017) argument that digital platforms have facilitated the formation of "mediated intimacy" between Islamic preachers and their followers. Through digital communication tools, preachers can directly engage with their audience and introduce modern, affective concepts that promote the everyday embodiment of Islamic piety.

Interesting Themes and Actual Issues

The ability to combine da'wa with modern elements is not a new phenomenon within the Indonesian Muslim community. Rakhmani, in her research on mainstreaming Islam in Indonesia, demonstrates that the development of entertaining da'wa began with the proliferation of private television stations around the 2000s, which she refers to as the phenomenon of the *da'wa supermarket* (Rakhmani, 2016). Commercial television stations created space for promoting products through creative and entertaining methods to attract consumer attention. Religious leaders later adopted this concept to enhance their da'wa efforts. This trend was subsequently followed by the introduction of new da'wa models, such as *da'watainment*, supernatural reality shows, da'wa competition shows, da'wa music, and *sinetron religi* (Islamic television dramas).

The presence of various social media platforms has provided a new means for conducting da'wa. Habib Ja'far utilizes the YouTube platform to spread his da'wa. In this context, he is particularly focused on making da'wa more entertaining and engaging for a broad audience, including youth and even non-Muslims. He carefully organizes the themes, titles, sources, and guest speakers for the content on his YouTube channel. The high number

of views on videos uploaded to the Jeda Nulis YouTube channel can be attributed to Habib Ja'far's ability to identify themes that appeal with a wide range of groups, including the younger generation and non-Muslim communities.

Table 1. Habib Ja'far's Preaching Theme In The Video

Theme	Video Title	Guest Star
Islam and Moderation	1. Islam religion of love 2. Islam is not religion of war	Habib Ja'far
Da'wa with Controversial Theme	1. <i>Jeda Ngobrol</i> (Talking about Peace) with Irfan Amalee, the founder of peace generation community 2. "From Drugs to Tarekat" with Abdel Achrian, one of famous presenter 3. Talking about Islam, music, and da'wa	Irfan Amalee, Abdel Achrian, Fikri Rasta
Da'wa to Youth Generation	1. Islam in west Indonesia 2. Da'wa of Lost Youth (<i>Kultum Pemuda Tersesat</i>)	Tretan Muslim, Coki Pardede, Arie Kriting, Kiki CJR, and Uus
Interfaith Da'wa	Preaching Tolerance: Islam and Buddha	Pattinasarany, Biksu Suryadi, Hong Tjhin

The combination of da'wa, pop culture, youthfulness, and current trends is one of the strengths of the da'wa method, making it highly relevant, particularly for urban middle-class Muslims (Priyadi, 2020). In this regard, Habib Ja'far has successfully integrated these elements into his da'wa, demonstrating great accuracy in selecting themes and inviting speakers. This approach has proven to be effective in enhancing the capacity of da'wa and making it more accessible to a broader audience. Looking ahead, this model of da'wa holds great potential, particularly with the use of social media as a platform. By collaborating with speakers from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, not only within Islamic traditions, this approach will engage a wider audience and make da'wa more entertaining and widely accepted.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the effectiveness of Islamic preaching in the digital era is not solely dependent on the preacher's theological background, but also on their ability to navigate platform-specific logics and algorithmic structures. By analyzing the case of Habib Husein Ja'far—who combines formal religious education with strategic digital engagement—this research illustrates how religious messages can be optimized to reach diverse audiences. Evidence from content analysis reveals that his effective use of hashtags, segmentation, themed programming, interactive strategies, and alignment with trending topics significantly enhance audience engagement. These elements highlight that algorithmic literacy, when coupled with theological integrity, can amplify both the depth and reach of da'wa. This case provides a compelling counterpoint to prevailing assumptions that digital da'wa is inherently shallow or driven purely by aesthetics.

The findings of this study provide critical insights into the transformation of religious authority and Islamic communication in the algorithmic age. By situating Habib Ja'far's

digital da'wa within broader theoretical frameworks—such as media ecology, mediatization, and mediated intimacy—this research makes a significant conceptual contribution to the study of religion and media. It highlights a new form of religious agency, wherein the preacher serves both as a theologian and a digital strategist. This hybrid identity challenges binary distinctions between traditional and modern authority, as well as rigid categorizations of 'authentic' versus 'popular' Islam. Theoretically, this article enriches current scholarship on Islamic preaching by proposing that algorithmic literacy functions as a new form of symbolic and communicative capital, reshaping not only who gets heard, but also how religious knowledge is structured and disseminated in digital public spheres.

Despite its contributions, this research acknowledges the limitations stemming from its single-case focus. While Habib Ja'far offers a compelling example of optimized digital da'wa, the diversity of Islamic influencers and digital ecologies across Indonesia calls for broader comparative studies. Future research could explore variations in digital da'wa strategies among male and female preachers, across urban and rural contexts, and within different theological affiliations. Additionally, further inquiry is necessary into the ethical implications of algorithmic manipulation and the commodification of religion. Policymakers and educators should also consider integrating digital literacy into Islamic education curricula to equip future preachers with the skills needed to engage critically and effectively in online religious spaces. Ultimately, this research advocates for a reconfiguration of how we conceptualize religious authority and practice in the algorithmic age—one that is both rooted in tradition and responsive to the logics of technological mediation.

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