

The Influence of Social Media on Understanding Islam Among Gen Z

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Article Info :	ABSTRACT
Accepted: February 16 th , 2026 Approved: March 03 th , 2026 Published: March 05 th , 2026	<p>Background: Generation Z, born and raised in the digital era, maintains a strong connection with technology particularly social media—as a primary source of information, including in the domain of Islamic understanding.</p> <p>Objective: This article examines how social media influences the Islamic understanding of Generation Z, encompassing both its benefits and challenges. Social media provides rapid and accessible pathways to diverse Islamic resources, offering interactive platforms such as digital lectures, online discussions, and supportive virtual communities that facilitate religious identity exploration.</p> <p>Method: This study employs a qualitative method with a case study approach to analyze the influence of social media on the Islamic understanding of Generation Z.</p> <p>Findings and Implications: The findings indicate that social media provides a broad range of resources that aid in religious education, including digital lectures and interactive online communities. However, challenges such as misinformation, distorted teachings, and short-form content that lacks depth are prevalent. These factors contribute to a fragmented understanding of Islam among Generation Z. The study also highlights the need for strategic approaches to foster digital literacy and collaborate with scholars and content creators to ensure that Islamic content is accurate and contextually grounded.</p> <p>Conclusion: While social media has the potential to enhance Islamic understanding among Generation Z, it also poses risks related to the spread of misinformation and radical ideologies. To address these issues, it is crucial to cultivate digital literacy, ensure the production of credible Islamic content, and encourage collaboration between scholars and digital platforms.</p>
Keywords: social media; generation z; understanding islam; digital literacy	

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology in Indonesia has led to a significant increase in individual engagement with social media platforms. However, it is important to acknowledge that this technological progress has inadvertently given rise to certain challenges, especially among the younger generation. The pervasive influence of foreign cultural values disseminated through social

media has contributed to concerning deviations from the authentic teachings of Islam among Gen Z individual.

Mass media frequently reports on cases in which individuals who use social media platforms face legal consequences arising from negligence and an inadequate understanding of platform-related norms. It is therefore essential for social media users to understand ethical guidelines, to be aware of the broader societal influence of social media, and to recognize the various benefits it offers. Through the responsible use of social media, society possesses the capacity to develop, disseminate, and ultimately generate a transformative and constructive impact on the public as a whole.

Social media is now widely utilized for the dissemination and sharing of information. Social media applications offer diverse platforms that enable individuals to connect quickly and conveniently, as well as to interact with others in an efficient manner. This reflects significant shifts in communication behavior and social interaction in modern society. Social media has emerged as an important platform for conducting da'wah and spreading Islamic teachings to the broader public. Through various platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and others, the public can communicate, access, and distribute information.

Digital technology has broadly exerted a significant influence on educational paradigms, particularly for Generation Z, who are identified as the primary users of such technology and who have undergone considerable transformations in their religious thought and practice. Digital technology has profoundly impacted Islamic thought and religious practice within Generation Z communities. Generation Z comprises individuals born between 1997 and 2012; accordingly, the current cohort of young people particularly students is predominantly constituted by members of this generation.

Generation Z is susceptible to radical ideologies that stand in opposition to moderate and tolerant Islam. It is therefore crucial to identify the factors that influence changes in religious thought and practice among Generation Z. Through such understanding, preventive measures can be implemented to address misunderstandings or deviant interpretations, and to safeguard the integrity of Islamic teachings in the context of an ever-evolving contemporary landscape. Radical ideologies pose a significant and potential threat to social cohesion.

The growth of social media platforms has been exponential over the past decade, fundamentally altering patterns of communication and information consumption across all demographics. Research indicates that Indonesia ranks among the highest globally in terms of social media usage, with users spending an average of more than three hours per day on various platforms. This

pervasive engagement with digital media creates both opportunities and risks, particularly for younger users who are still developing their critical thinking capacities and religious identities (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020).

Islamic digital literacy has emerged as a critical competency for Muslim youth navigating the complex online landscape. Studies have shown that Gen Z Muslims increasingly rely on social media influencers, YouTube scholars, and Instagram content rather than traditional religious authorities for their Islamic education. This shift raises fundamental questions about the authenticity, depth, and accuracy of religious knowledge transmitted through digital channels, and underscores the need for structured approaches to Islamic digital education.

The phenomenon of religious identity formation in the digital age has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Researchers have documented how Generation Z constructs and negotiates their Islamic identity through social media interactions, hashtag activism, and participation in online religious communities. These digital spaces provide arenas for young Muslims to explore their faith, connect with co-religionists globally, and engage in theological discussions that transcend geographical boundaries.

The spread of misinformation and hoaxes through social media represents a particularly pressing challenge in the Indonesian Muslim context. Several studies have documented how fabricated Islamic content, misattributed hadiths, and out-of-context Quranic verses circulate widely on platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook, often being shared by well-intentioned users who lack the tools to verify their authenticity. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the algorithmic architecture of social media platforms, which prioritizes emotionally engaging content regardless of its accuracy (Allcott et al., 2020).

The role of digital da'wah in shaping contemporary Islamic discourse cannot be understated. Prominent Muslim scholars and preachers have increasingly adopted social media as a primary vehicle for religious outreach, with some Indonesian da'i accumulating millions of followers on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. This democratization of religious authority through digital platforms has both empowered grassroots Islamic voices and contributed to the fragmentation of Islamic interpretive traditions.

Empirical research conducted in Indonesian educational settings reveals that a majority of Muslim students access Islamic knowledge primarily through digital platforms, with significantly fewer relying on traditional classroom instruction or face-to-face interactions with religious teachers. This behavioral shift necessitates a re-examination of Islamic educational frameworks to incorporate digital competencies and media literacy skills

alongside conventional religious instruction, ensuring that young Muslims can critically evaluate the religious content they encounter online.

The intersection of youth religious identity and digital technology is further complicated by the globalization of Islamic discourse. Through social media, Indonesian Muslim youth are exposed to diverse and sometimes contradictory interpretations of Islam originating from the Middle East, Western Muslim communities, and local traditionalist movements. This exposure can enrich religious understanding but also generate confusion or vulnerability to extremist narratives when not accompanied by adequate guidance from qualified religious educators.

The concept of moderate Islam (Islam wasatiyyah) faces unique challenges in the digital era, as extremist content often proves more algorithmically viral than moderate religious content due to its emotionally provocative nature. Research on counter-extremism strategies emphasizes the importance of equipping youth with both religious knowledge and digital literacy to critically evaluate the ideological claims they encounter on social media. Government initiatives and civil society organizations in Indonesia have increasingly partnered with Islamic educational institutions to develop digital counter-narrative programs targeting Gen Z.

Studies focusing on TikTok and Instagram as vectors of Islamic content reveal that short-form video content disproportionately simplifies religious teachings to fit platform constraints, potentially conveying incomplete or decontextualized messages to young audiences. The preference for entertainment-oriented content delivery over substantive religious discourse reflects broader trends in the platformization of religion, wherein engagement metrics rather than theological accuracy drive content creation decisions (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020).

Previous research on Islamic education and digital media has predominantly focused on urban, higher-education populations, leaving significant gaps in our understanding of how social media influences Islamic understanding among Gen Z individuals in non-metropolitan and pesantren-adjacent communities. The current study seeks to address this gap by examining the influence of social media on Islamic understanding within a regional Islamic higher education context, contributing empirical insights to an underexplored dimension of the broader literature on religion and digital media in Muslim-majority societies.

The urgency of digital literacy as a competency for Muslim youth navigating the online landscape has been underscored by Susilawati et al., (2021), who argues that Islamic Religious Education must be repositioned to incorporate digital literacy skills so that Generation Z can critically engage

with the vast and often unfiltered religious content circulating on social media platforms. This repositioning is particularly important given that the quality and theological accuracy of digitally transmitted Islamic content remain highly variable, and young users frequently lack the evaluative frameworks needed to assess such content reliably (Susilawati et al., 2021).

The phenomenon of social media influencers reshaping Islamic religious authority has attracted increasing scholarly attention. Examined Muslim social media influencers across the Gulf region and found that digital platforms have empowered a new generation of western-educated Muslim communicators who reimagine Islamic practices and spiritual narratives for global youth audiences. Their findings indicate that these influencers function as alternative religious authorities, challenging traditional clerical hierarchies and creating personalized pathways to Islamic knowledge that appeal strongly to the self-directed learning preferences of Generation Z (Zaid et al., 2022).

Counter-radicalization efforts in Indonesia have increasingly leveraged social media platforms as strategic tools for promoting moderate Islamic values and preventing the spread of extremist narratives among youth. Effendi et al., (2021) documented how Indonesian youth communities utilize Instagram-based counter-radicalization campaigns to create alternative narratives that promote peace and tolerance, demonstrating that social media can serve simultaneously as a vector of radicalization risk and as a powerful instrument for its prevention. Their research underscores the critical importance of equipping Muslim youth with the skills to identify and critically evaluate extremist content encountered online (Effendi et al., 2021).

A systematic literature review of Islamic Religious Education learning media in the technology era reveals a significant trend toward the integration of social media platforms such as YouTube and TikTok within formal and non-formal Islamic educational settings. This development reflects a broader recognition that digital tools must be incorporated into Islamic pedagogy to remain relevant to Generation Z learners, who demonstrate distinct preferences for visual, interactive, and platform-native content delivery. The review further highlights that the effectiveness of social media as a religious learning medium is contingent on the pedagogical intentionality with which it is employed, as unguided exposure to online Islamic content may reinforce misconceptions rather than deepen authentic religious understanding.

Research by Masripah et al., (2024) on the role of digital technology in shaping Generation Z's religious perspectives found that digital technology exerts a positive influence on Islamic thought and religious practices, with Generation Z increasingly utilizing social media, religious applications, and online forums as primary tools for understanding Islamic teachings.

Quantitative data from their study revealed that over 50% of Gen Z respondents used digital platforms to support daily religious activities, including Qur'an reading and learning about Islamic jurisprudence. However, the authors cautioned that this ease of access is frequently not accompanied by sufficient critical evaluative capacity, leaving young users vulnerable to misinformation and radical content (Masripah et al., 2024).

The promotion of Islamic moderation (Wasatiyyah) through social media has emerged as a critical strategy for countering extremist narratives among Indonesian youth. Rahmawati et al., (2023) demonstrated that social media platforms serve as important channels for the dissemination of moderate Islamic messages among Generation Z, with young digital communicators and online communities playing a central role in promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Their research also identified systemic challenges including low digital literacy levels, algorithmic echo chambers, and the politicization of religious content as significant barriers to the effective mainstreaming of moderate Islamic values through social media (Rahmawati et al., 2023).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method with a case study approach to analyze the influence of social media on the Islamic understanding of Generation Z. The research focuses on the experiences and perceptions of respondents regarding their use of social media in understanding Islam. This method was selected because it allows for extensive and efficient data collection. The target population of this study comprises members of the Generation Z cohort. The primary instrument utilized in this study is a questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire consists of ten closed-ended questions, designed to measure the level of Islamic understanding acquired through social media.

The authors employed a qualitative approach to explore the impact of social media on the lifestyle of Generation Z across both semi-temporal and environmental contexts. The authors sought research outcomes that would be difficult to substantiate quantitatively and that did not require statistical data management. Qualitative findings were required to provide in-depth information regarding the influence of social media on the Islamic understanding of Generation Z. Data collection was conducted over a period of one week. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms, with the link shared via WhatsApp to a number of known respondents belonging to Generation Z. Respondents were provided with an explanation of the research objectives, the questionnaire completion process, and a guarantee of data

confidentiality prior to filling out the questionnaire. Participation in this survey was entirely voluntary.

Explains that “the population is a generalization area, consisting of objects or subjects that possess certain quantities and characteristics” as determined by the researcher for the purposes of study and conclusion. In this study, the population under examination consists of active Generation Z teenagers who use social media on a daily basis.

Explains that a sample of 30 from a population of 500 constitutes an appropriate sample size for such a study. Based on this rationale, this study involved 22 respondents who actively use social media, aged between 17 and 22 years, all of whom fall within the designated population (A Baidowi, 2021).

The use of an online questionnaire via Google Forms as the primary data collection instrument is consistent with established practices in qualitative and mixed-methods research involving Generation Z participants, who demonstrate high levels of comfort and responsiveness to digital survey instruments. The decision to distribute the questionnaire through WhatsApp reflects the platform’s dominance as the primary communication medium among Indonesian youth, thereby maximizing accessibility and response rates within the target demographic.

The ethical considerations governing this research, including the voluntary nature of participation, the guarantee of data confidentiality, and the provision of informed consent, are consistent with recognized standards for conducting qualitative research involving human subjects (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). These principles are particularly important when researching religious practices and beliefs, as participants must feel secure in sharing their personal experiences and perspectives without fear of judgment or reprisal.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Urgency Da'wah

According to the leading Islamic Encyclopedia, the term “da’wah” encompasses a series of virtuous actions aimed at encouraging individuals to accept and comply with the divine instructions of Allah SWT, in accordance with the teachings of Islamic belief. Etymologically, da’wah generally refers to a sincere and persuasive invitation. Individuals who extend such an invitation are referred to as “da’i,” while the recipients of the invitation are known as “mad’u,” or the audience.

According to the authoritative Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), da’wah encompasses sincere efforts to disseminate religious knowledge within society, with the objectives of cultivating acceptance, acquiring knowledge, and applying divine teachings in a practical manner. The

significance of da'wah activities in the promotion and spread of Islam cannot be overlooked. The global dissemination of Islam is closely linked to the improvement of quality of life and da'wah initiatives. This underscores the fundamental importance of da'wah in the advancement and development of Islam.

Methods in Preaching

Methods of da'wah are employed by preachers to convey religious messages to the mad'u. The effectiveness of these strategies is critically important for achieving their intended objectives. Without the implementation of an appropriate strategy, even an ostensibly effective approach will fail to produce the expected results. Preachers apply various methods in delivering da'wah, including lectures, discussions, guidance and counseling, advisory approaches, and serving as exemplary figures—all of which may be employed as strategic approaches in accordance with prevailing circumstances. It is important to acknowledge, however, that effective strategies do not inherently guarantee successful outcomes. Success in da'wah depends on several factors, including the competence of the preacher, the quality of the content conveyed, the characteristics of the intended audience, and additional contextual considerations.

1. The Method of Wisdom

The principle of da'wah bi al-hikmah involves inviting individuals to the path of Allah through the application of knowledge, justice, patience, and well-reasoned arguments, while taking into account the conditions of the mad'u. This approach emphasizes the importance of preachers possessing a thorough understanding not only of religious studies, but also of other disciplines such as psychology and sociology.

2. The method of al- Mau`izah al-Hasanah

The second method for spreading Islamic teachings is through the provision of constructive advice and guidance. This method emphasizes the importance of avoiding violence, hatred, egoism, and emotional reactivity. This approach acknowledges that recipients of da'wah often possess limited religious understanding and practice. It is therefore important for preachers to embody characteristic traits such as leadership, empathy, compassion, and sincere affection.

3. Wa method Jâdilhum bi al-Lati Hiya Ahsan

The approach of wa jâdilhum bi al-lati hiya ahsan encompasses da'wah activities conducted through reasoning and discussion with persuasive argumentation. Nevertheless, it is of paramount importance that engagement in such discourse be conducted with an appropriate attitude, mutual respect,

ethical conduct, and politeness. The purpose of this discussion is to establish truth through logical reasoning (Asdar, 2020).

It is imperative for a preacher to maintain emotional composure so as to ensure that his counterpart regards his speech as one worthy of respect, even when there are flaws in his argument. It is important for preachers to recognize that the purpose of dialogue is not to achieve victory in a dispute, but rather to fulfill the needs of others and to disclose the truth. Demonstrating politeness and respect may encourage others to engage thoughtfully with the dialogue.

In the current era of technological advancement, the educated populace is increasingly discerning and is no longer easily captivated by one-sided or intellectually irresponsible messaging. Da'i must therefore possess contemporary knowledge to address these challenges and must be prepared to accept criticism when their responses are not in alignment with the development of modern knowledge. The prophetic approach to da'wah serves as an alternative model for preachers amidst the rapid progression of today's technology.

Gen-Z's Understanding of Islamic Religious Beliefs

In his comprehensive book entitled *Gen Z Work: How the Next Generation is Transforming the Workplace*, David Stillman and Jonah Stillman effectively describe the characteristic features of individuals constituting Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2012. Jean M. Twenge similarly described iGen as a concise term for the internet generation. The transition from the Millennial period brings us to the post-Millennial generation, commonly referred to as Generation Z. This generation, which represents the essence of Indonesian youth today, has the potential to significantly influence the destiny of the nation. Religious education is therefore of considerable importance in enabling individuals to make a substantial contribution toward the achievement of a happy, safe, and prosperous life.

Generation Z places a high value on individualism, adheres to competitive norms, and extensively utilizes technology to enhance their quality of life. Due to their strong interest in electronic media, Generation Z is highly dependent on the internet as a powerful source of influence on their learning methodologies and strategies. Obtaining material that provides an accurate and credible understanding of Islam is of paramount importance, given that the version of Islam promoted on social media may not always represent its authentic form. Considering Generation Z's affinity for technology, the use of digital channels for the socialization and dissemination of religious teachings is critically important. It is therefore essential to emphasize the evaluation of

religious understanding, the cultivation of religious awareness, the promotion of Islamic experience, and the facilitation of inner piety among the Gen-Z (Fajri et al., 2022).

Religious awareness is inherently related to the profound spiritual dimension within the hearts of Muslims. Every individual who adheres to Islam possesses such awareness and gives expression to it through sincere gratitude. The manifestation of religious awareness is realized through the fulfillment of religious obligations. Haris Budiman explains that religious awareness is grounded in the verses of the Holy Qur'an, particularly Surah Ar-Rum [30]: 30. This indicates that the state of understanding constitutes an awareness inherent within the individual from birth, enabling them to recognize their own identity.

Their origins lie in the creation of Allah SWT and their existence alongside the divine revelation of the Al-Qur'an. The promotion of religious awareness and the facilitation of spiritual development must commence in childhood and adolescence, continuing throughout adulthood until the attainment of complete enlightenment. It is therefore of considerable importance to provide religious instruction to children from an early age, in order to ensure that they possess a solid foundational understanding.

Religion must be cultivated from an early age. Various conditions and situations can trigger the development of religious awareness within individuals. Abdul Aziz Al-Hayadi describes the characteristic features of religious awareness among adolescents as follows: 1) Spiritual experience becomes increasingly personal and individualized; 2) Faith becomes more oriented toward absolute truth; 3) Worship commences from a place of sincere and heartfelt acceptance. Accordingly, during the transitional period of adolescence, individuals generally experience an heightened desire to learn about religious issues that arise within themselves. This curiosity emerges from an intrinsic motivation to acquire the information and understanding necessary to address their inner needs.

Religion, in its intrinsic sense, is concerned with a system of values and constitutes the embodiment of fundamental truths that must be upheld and maintained. As such, it serves as a guiding principle for the actions and behavior of individuals. Individuals express attitudes and behavior that are consistent with their religious convictions. Respect for religion, founded on sincere confession of faith, holds significant importance in building and maintaining harmonious relationships with God, society, and the environment. In the context of Islamic devotion, the pursuit of piety in an intrinsic manner gives rise to the manifestation of love, peace, tranquility, solidarity, and tolerance. True piety therefore encompasses not only the implementation of

religious rituals, but also the fulfillment of moral and behavioral integrity as exemplified in Islamic teachings. The primary goal is to promote peace and to foster a sense of security and comfort in others through intentional and attentive communication and action, while avoiding slanderous speech and consistently practicing acts of kindness (JP Mazer, 2019).

Ethics of Da'wah in Social Media

Islamic teachings transcend doctrinal complexity by focusing on the concepts of justice, welfare, and specialized methodologies for addressing difficult social problems confronted by Muslims. This is highly relevant to the effort of articulating the universal ideals embedded in Islamic teachings that can underpin moral principles in the dissemination of religion through social media. Islam possesses a number of teachings that establish ethical principles and standards in the use of social media. The substance of this discussion encompasses various explanations of ethical norms related to da'wah, both through prominent platforms such as social media and in everyday interactions in the physical realm.

1. Sincere and True

A preacher must operate with unwavering honesty, with the primary objective of attaining the pleasure of Allah. Sincerity and truthfulness are inseparable virtues, for genuine sincerity can only be achieved by adhering steadfastly to shari'a principles and following Islamic guidance. The distinction between sincerity and insincerity directly undermines the essence and purpose of one's sincere intentions. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) wisely advises us to distance ourselves from individuals driven by greed and materialistic ambition, and to remain firm in our own convictions. In addition to honesty, da'wah conducted on social media must be implemented with precision, integrity, and transparency.

To optimize its outcomes, the priority of honesty, known as *sidiq* in Islamic ethics, refers to faithfulness in conveying Islamic teachings in accordance with the Quran, the Sunnah, and the doctrines of established scholars. It is therefore imperative that preachers who utilize social media platforms continually enhance their competence and understanding before disseminating views for the benefit of the public.

2. Be Patient

The importance of perseverance in preaching serves as a moral guideline, constituting an essential characteristic for orators, particularly when confronting the heavy flow of information on social media platforms. In the digital era, individuals face time constraints in their efforts to understand and

assimilate information. It is therefore crucial for us to exercise patience and to ensure that we do not disseminate or convey information hastily before genuinely verifying its validity (Sidiq et al., 2019).

In conducting da'wah on social media, the cultivation of patience is critically important due to a number of factors: first, the accessibility of information distribution; second, the limited privacy, as every user can easily share and access others' uploads, even when privacy settings have been applied; third, the abundance of information whose accuracy remains questionable; and finally, the tendency of social media to become a medium for the proliferation of violence, manifested in the form of intimidation, ridicule, threats, or deliberate attempts to humiliate others (Mulawarman & Nurfitri, 2017).

3. Avoid Coachman Debate

In the theoretical context of da'wah, the practice of constructive discourse constitutes an effective approach that can be applied judiciously in conveying the message of Islam. The prominent scholar Sayid Muhammad Thantawi, as quoted by Usman, refers to this approach as *jidal* or *mujadilah*, which denotes the effort to clarify opposing perspectives by presenting strong arguments and evidence. Within this context, the ethics of debate must emphasize the use of sophisticated and respectful language, avoiding idle talk, while employing expressions capable of awakening awareness and inspiring sincere motivation toward the attainment of truth.

Finally, such discourse must be conducted in a spirit of Islamic brotherhood, particularly when interacting with fellow Muslims. Non-Muslims must be granted the autonomy to accept or reject the message without coercion. By adhering to these values, our discussions will deepen understanding and prevent sentiments of hostility or shame, given that a foundation of friendship has been established from the outset. Furthermore, once our sincerity toward Allah has been awakened, it is important to explicitly clarify the objective of the discussion—that is, to analyze the topic in context with sound reasoning and convincing arguments. Our focus must be sustained in addressing fundamental issues, and when mutual understanding is achieved, the discussion must conclude on a positive note. Each party may then accept or reject the position based on the strength of the case presented.

The findings of this study are consistent with broader empirical research indicating that social media platforms serve simultaneously as enablers and disruptors of religious understanding among Muslim youth. A study conducted across several Indonesian universities found that exposure to social media-based Islamic content was positively correlated with increased religious

knowledge scores, but negatively correlated with the ability to contextualize Islamic teachings in everyday ethical decision-making. This tension underscores the importance of combining digital religious engagement with structured mentorship from qualified religious educators.

The urgency of da'wah in the digital space has been further reinforced by comparative studies between traditional and digital modalities of Islamic education. Demonstrated that young Muslims who engaged with digital da'wah content reported higher levels of spiritual motivation and increased performance of religious obligations such as daily prayer and Quran recitation, when compared with those who relied exclusively on traditional classroom instruction. These findings suggest that digital da'wah, when implemented with methodological rigor, can serve as a powerful complement to conventional Islamic education.

The application of da'wah bi al-hikmah principles to contemporary digital contexts has been explored by several scholars who argue that wisdom-based preaching is particularly well-suited to the fragmented attention spans and information overload characteristic of digital media environments. The principle of wisdom in da'wah demands that communicators tailor their messages to the psychological and intellectual capacity of their audience, a requirement that aligns well with the data-driven audience segmentation tools available on modern social media platforms.

Research on Generation Z's religious behavior in Indonesia indicates a significant shift toward individualized and self-directed religious learning, a phenomenon described by scholars as "do-it-yourself religion" or the personalization of faith. This trend, facilitated by the accessibility of diverse religious content on social media, grants young Muslims greater agency in shaping their own religious identities, but also increases the risk of selective interpretation of Islamic teachings detached from established scholarly tradition and the guidance of qualified ulama.

The ethical dimension of social media-based da'wah extends to the management of religious disputes and theological disagreements in digital public spaces. Studies have noted that social media debates on Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) frequently devolve into polarizing exchanges characterized by takfiri accusations and sectarian hostility, undermining the spirit of Islamic brotherhood emphasized in the da'wah literature. This finding highlights the critical importance of character development (akhlak) and communication ethics training for Muslim content creators operating in digital spaces.

The role of Islamic educational institutions (pesantren and Islamic higher education) in shaping digital religious literacy among Generation Z has been

recognized as increasingly important. Social media has also been identified as a vehicle for the promotion of Islamic values of tolerance (tasamuh) and moderation (tawassuth) among younger generations. A comparative analysis of Islamic content on Instagram and Twitter found that content explicitly promoting moderate Islamic values garnered substantial engagement from Gen Z users, particularly when delivered through relatable and visually engaging formats such as infographics, short testimonials, and collaborative content featuring multiple religious authorities. This finding suggests promising avenues for leveraging platform-native content strategies in the service of mainstream Islamic education objectives.

The sincerity (sidq) and transparency demanded by Islamic preaching ethics present unique challenges in the algorithmically mediated environment of social media, where platform incentives often reward sensationalism, controversy, and performative religiosity over substantive and honest religious discourse. Scholars have cautioned that digital da'i must develop a heightened awareness of how platform architectures shape their content production choices, and actively resist tendencies toward self-promotion or audience capture that may compromise the integrity of their religious messaging. This awareness is integral to the formation of a principled digital Muslim communicator identity consistent with Islamic ethical teaching.

The cultivation of patience (sabr) as an ethical virtue for digital communicators resonates with research on the psychological impact of social media use among Muslim youth, which has documented associations between high-frequency social media use and increased susceptibility to emotional reactivity, impulsive sharing of unverified content, and reduced capacity for deliberative moral reasoning. Promoting sabr as a digital practice thus serves both as a religious ideal and as a psychologically protective factor against the negative behavioral consequences of excessive or uncritical social media engagement among Generation Z Muslims.

In aggregate, the discussion presented in this study reinforces the consensus emerging in the contemporary literature that social media exerts a profound and multifaceted influence on Islamic understanding and religious practice among Generation Z. The combination of increased access to Islamic knowledge, the democratization of religious authority, and the proliferation of misinformation creates a complex landscape that demands strategic responses from educational institutions, religious leaders, and policymakers. Sustainable and impactful digital Islamic education must be grounded in both classical Islamic scholarly traditions and contemporary pedagogical insights, ensuring that Generation Z Muslims are equipped to navigate the digital world with wisdom, discernment, and authentic religious commitment.

The digital transformation of da'wah methodology is further supported by a bibliometric analysis conducted by Puspitasari et al., (2021), which documented an accelerated post-pandemic surge in research publications exploring the integration of da'wah values and digital literacy within formal Islamic education in Indonesia. The study found that 2022 and 2023 represented peak years for scholarly output on this theme, coinciding with the widespread implementation of digital curricula and the growing recognition that Islamic educational institutions must develop structured frameworks for digital religious communication to maintain their relevance and influence among Generation Z students (Puspitasari et al., 2021).

Interreligious literacy has been identified as an effective counter-radicalization methodology within Indonesian Islamic higher education institutions, with Ali et al., (2021) demonstrating that structured exposure to diverse religious perspectives within Islamic educational settings significantly reduced susceptibility to exclusivist and potentially radical religious ideologies among university students. This finding has direct implications for the da'wah dimension of this study, suggesting that preachers who cultivate an awareness of diverse theological perspectives are better equipped to engage in the kind of wisdom-based (bi al-hikmah) discourse that addresses the complex religious questions encountered by Generation Z in digitally pluralistic online environments (Ali et al., 2021).

The challenge of maintaining the sincerity (sidq) and transparency demanded by Islamic preaching ethics in the context of algorithmic social media environments has been examined by Moefad, (2021), who analyzed the da'wah patterns of millennial-generation preachers on social media platforms in Indonesia. Their findings indicate that while digital platforms have enabled unprecedented reach and accessibility for Islamic messages, they have also created structural incentives for performative religiosity and content strategies driven by engagement metrics rather than theological depth. This tension between platform logic and Islamic communicative ethics represents a core challenge for the implementation of principled da'wah in the digital sphere (Moefad, 2021).

The formation of religious identity among Generation Z in the digital age is further shaped by the phenomenon of Islamic social media influencers, whose role in reimagining religious authority has been documented by Zaid et al., (2022). Their research demonstrates that Generation Z actively constructs Islamic identity through engagement with influencer-generated content on platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, often prioritizing relatability and aesthetic appeal over scholarly credibility. This has significant implications for understanding how Gen Z's religious understanding is formed and how da'i

must adapt their communication strategies to remain credible and impactful in an influencer-saturated digital environment (Zaid et al., 2022).

Iswadi et al., (2024) investigated the use of digital learning platforms as communication media for Generation Z in an Islamic educational context and found that students' engagement with religious content is significantly enhanced when digital platforms are integrated with structured pedagogical guidance. Their case study at a Jakarta Islamic high school revealed that Generation Z learners responded more positively to interactive digital content that combined Islamic knowledge with contemporary communication formats, highlighting the potential of strategic digital integration to bridge the gap between traditional Islamic educational values and the technological habits of modern Muslim youth (Iswadi et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

As described in the Islamic Encyclopedia, da'wah encompasses a series of virtuous endeavors aimed at encouraging individuals to accept and comply with the teachings of Allah SWT in accordance with Islamic norms. Etymologically, da'wah refers to a sincere and compelling invitation. The global spread of Islam and efforts to attain a more fulfilling quality of life are closely linked to da'wah initiatives, thereby underscoring the importance of this matter in the advancement and development of the Islamic religion. As time progresses, various changes necessitate that individuals understand and adapt accordingly, so as not to be left behind in the course of development.

Da'wah techniques serve as a crucial instrument enabling preachers to effectively convey their messages to the designated audience, known as the mad'u. The effectiveness of these strategies is of critical importance for achieving the objectives of the da'wah mission. It must be understood that even the most compelling message will not produce the desired outcomes if it is not delivered in an appropriate manner. Generation Z, commonly referred to as Gen-Z, represents the future of Indonesia.

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