

## DIGITAL DA'WAH AND RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING AMONG THE INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS OF @tebuiheng.online

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### Abstract

*The dynamics of da'wah in digital spaces have transformed the way society obtains and constructs religious understanding. This study is important for analyzing the characteristics of digital da'wah content on the Instagram account @tebuiheng.online and the process through which followers' religious understanding is formed. This research employs a qualitative method using a case study approach and reception analysis, conducted through digital observation and in-depth interviews with followers of the @tebuiheng.online account. The findings show that the da'wah content is dominated by the Reels format, characterized by attractive visuals, communicative language, and material that is relevant to everyday life. Followers interpret the content as a source of religious knowledge, a reinforcement of spirituality, and a practical reference for socio-religious life.*

**Keywords:** Digital Da'wah, Followers, @tebuiheng.online, Islamic Boarding School.

### Abstrak

Dinamika dakwah di ruang digital telah mengubah cara masyarakat memperoleh dan membangun pemahaman keagamaan. Penelitian ini penting untuk menganalisis karakteristik konten dakwah digital pada akun Instagram @tebuiheng.online dan proses pembentukan pemahaman agama *followers* melalui interaksi konten. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan studi kasus dan analisis resepsi melalui observasi digital dan wawancara mendalam terhadap *followers* akun @tebuiheng.online. Hasil penelitian bahwa konten dakwah didominasi format Reels dengan karakteristik visual yang menarik, bahasa komunikatif, dan materi yang relevan dengan kehidupan sehari-hari. Followers memaknai konten sebagai pengetahuan agama, penguat spiritualitas, dan referensi praktis dalam kehidupan sosial-keagamaan.

**Kata Kunci:** Dakwah Digital, Followers, @tebuiheng.online, Pesantren.



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## A. INTRODUCTION

The transformation of Islamic da'wah from traditional religious spaces to the digital ecosystem is one of the most significant phenomena of 21st-century religious communication. Social media is no longer merely a medium for conveying messages; rather, it has evolved into a participatory public sphere in which religious authority is negotiated, religious identities are constructed, and religious understanding is collectively shaped. This phenomenon raises a major concern the shift of religious authority from traditional scholars with clear scholarly lineages to digital figures whose legitimacy is built through algorithmic popularity and audience engagement, which may result in the fragmentation of religious understanding and the spread of unverified religious information.<sup>1</sup>

The transformation of Islamic da'wah from traditional gathering spaces to the digital ecosystem is one of the most significant phenomena in religious communication in the 21st century. Social media is no longer merely a medium for conveying messages; rather, it has evolved into a participatory public sphere where religious authority is negotiated, religious identities are constructed, and religious understanding is collectively shaped.<sup>2</sup> This phenomenon presents a major and concerning issue: the shift of religious authority from traditional scholars with clear scholarly lineages to digital figures whose legitimacy is built through algorithmic popularity and audience engagement, which has the potential to result in the fragmentation of religious understanding and the spread of unverified religious information.<sup>3</sup>

Indonesia, as the country with the world's largest Muslim population—numbering approximately 231 million—is one of the nations with the highest social media penetration globally. Data from We Are Social and Kepios indicate that more than 190 million users, or about 69 percent of the total population, are active on social media. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become strategic arenas for da'wah, particularly in reaching younger generations who are accustomed to digital content. Research indicates that the digitalization of da'wah offers significant opportunities for enhancing religious literacy, engaging the younger generation, and shaping a narrative of moderate Islam;

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<sup>1</sup> Munawara, Andre Rahmanto, and Ign Agung Satyawan, "Pemanfaatan Media Digital Untuk Dakwah Pesantren Tebuireng," *KOMUNIKA: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 14, no. 1 (2020): 29–45.

<sup>2</sup> Alfiah Nurrohmah, "Efektivitas Instagram Sebagai Media Dakwah ( Studi Pada Followers Akun Instagram @xkwavers)," *Jurnal Berkala Epidemiologi* 5, no. 1 (2020): 90–96.

<sup>3</sup> Deni Kurniawan, Ahmad Mirzaq Miftahul Huda, and Moch Sulaiman, "Perbandingan Komunikasi Keagamaan Pesantren Di Instagram: Analisis Isi Akun Nurul Jadid Dan Genggong," *MAUIZOH: Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 10, no. 2 (2025): 37–54.

however, it also faces substantial challenges in the form of digital access disparities, religious disinformation, and the polarization of opinions.<sup>4</sup>

In the context of this tension between traditional and digital authorities, Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School represents a critical case for study. As the oldest and most influential Islamic boarding school in Indonesia, founded by K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari in 1899, Tebuireng possesses strong historical legitimacy and a scholarly lineage rooted in the Nahdlatul Ulama tradition.<sup>5</sup> Its presence in digital space through the official Instagram account @tebuireng.online reflects the intersection of traditional religious authority with participatory and visual digital communication culture.<sup>6</sup> The selection of the @tebuireng.online account as the research subject is based on three fundamental reasons. First, Tebuireng represents a traditional pesantren institution that has adapted strategically without compromising its scholarly integrity, unlike non-institutional digital preachers who are often criticized for their lack of formal religious credentials. Second, as the largest NU pesantren, Tebuireng bears a moral responsibility to uphold moderate Islam (*wasathiyah*) amid the proliferation of radical content on social media. Third, the number of followers and the level of interaction on this account provide rich empirical data for understanding how audiences interpret da'wah from traditional authoritative institutions.<sup>7</sup>

Previous studies on digital da'wah in Indonesia have generally focused more on the communication strategies of da'is and content production than on audience experiences in receiving religious messages. Eva F. Nisa's 2018 study examined visual da'wah by young Muslim women on Instagram, focusing on the creative and productive practices of Muslim teenage girls,<sup>8</sup> published in the Scopus-indexed journal *Asiascape: Digital Asia*. Meanwhile, Martin Slama<sup>9</sup> analyzed the ambivalence of Islamic social media in Indonesia from a technology and society perspective in the journal *Economic Anthropology*. Other studies,

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<sup>4</sup> Dessy Kushardiyanti, "Tren Konten Dakwah Digital Oleh Content Creator Milenial Melalui Media Sosial TikTok Di Era Pandemi Covid-19," *Orasi: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 12, no. 1 (2021): 97-114.

<sup>5</sup> Zulfikar Ikrom and Muhammad Fauzan Nugraha, "Literasi Dakwah Digital Pada Akun Media Sosial Instagram Nahdlatul Ulama @nuonline\_id," *Meyarsa: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi Dan Dakwah* 5, no. 1 (2024): 59-70.

<sup>6</sup> Riska Maya Annisa and Lailatul Mukaromah, "Pemanfaatan Media Sosial Sebagai Sarana Dakwah Dan Edukasi Di Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung Banyuwangi," *An Najah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Sosial Agama* 4, no. 4 (2025): 75-82

<sup>7</sup> Ulfa Nurhalimah, et al., "Dakwah Islam Di Era Digital: Peluang, Tantangan, Dan Strategi Pemanfaatan Media Sosial Studi Analisis Peran Media Sosial Dalam Penyebaran Nilai-Nilai Islam," *Millatuna: Jurnal Studi Islam* 3, no. 01 (2026): 123-133.

<sup>8</sup> Eva F. Nisa, "Creative and Lucrative Dawah: The Visual Culture of Instagram amongst Female Muslim Youth in Indonesia," *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 5, no. 1-2 (2018): 68-89.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Slama, "A Subtle Economy of Time: Social Media and the Transformation of Indonesia's Islamic Preacher Economy," *Economic Anthropology* 4, no. 1 (2017): 94-106.

such as the research on the @je.k account,<sup>10</sup> highlight how non-institutional alternative religious authority is formed through participatory communication, and the research on @nuonline\_id analyzes digital da'wah literacy from the account administrators' perspective, finding that this account has successfully reached 1.1 million followers<sup>11</sup>.

However, there is a significant theoretical gap because the perspective of followers as active subjects who interpret and internalize digital da'wah has not received adequate attention, particularly in the context of Islamic boarding schools, which have a distinctive structure of scholarly authority. Research on the reception of followers of the @hanan\_attaki account has begun to shift its focus to the audience, but remains limited to individual preachers rather than institutions.<sup>12</sup> A study on the effectiveness of Instagram as a da'wah medium among A study of @Ahilmanfauzi's followers employed a descriptive quantitative approach with 100 respondents and found an 83 percent effectiveness rate, yet it did not explore the deeper interpretive processes. Similarly, a study of follower perceptions regarding @halimahalaydrus used a constructivist qualitative approach that focused on general perceptions across three aspects (cognitive, affective, and conative) rather than on internalization in daily life.<sup>13</sup>

Recent studies indicate that digitalization has led Indonesian Muslims to become more pragmatic in their search for religious meaning, presenting three main challenges: easy internet access that provides instant but partial solutions; an increase in religious activities not matched by digital literacy; and instant solutions from social media that result in an incomplete understanding.<sup>14</sup> A narrative review on digital da'wah emphasizes that more research is needed on audience reception as a key recommendation for the development of this field.<sup>15</sup> Data from 150 items of digital da'wah content (2024–2025) indicates that depth of

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<sup>10</sup> Alief Rifqy Firdausy and Khalimatu Nisa, "Otoritas Keagamaan Dalam Ruang Digital : Studi Kasus Akun Instagram @ Je . K," 2026.

<sup>11</sup> Zulfikar Ikrom and Muhammad Fauzan Nugraha. "Literasi Dakwah Digital pada Akun Media Sosial Instagram Nahdlatul Ulama@ nuonline\_id." *Meyarsa: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi Dan Dakwah* 5, no. 1 (2024): 59-70.

<sup>12</sup> Guesty Tania, "Analisis Isi Pesan Dakwah Ustadz Hanan Attaki di Media Sosial Instagram." PhD diss., UIN Raden Intan Lampung, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Liza Nuarida Ulfah et al., "The Da ' Wah Approach of Ustadzah Halimah Alaydrus on Instagram," *JDK: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 9, no. 2 (2024): 108–121.

<sup>14</sup> Ariyanto Iwan, "Dakwah Modern Pada Era Digital (Studi Kasus Youtube Pondok Pesantren Terpadu Al Multazam Kuningan Jawa Barat)." *Risalah: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Studi Islam* 9, no. 1 (2023): 327-336.

<sup>15</sup> Happy Agustiani, "Digitalization and Social Da'wah: Innovative Models of Islamic Community Development in the Era of Digital Transformation," *Al Jamahiria Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Dakwah Islam* 3, no. 2 (2025): 195–209.

content remains a crucial factor for stronger understanding, even though short-form content is effective at capturing initial attention.<sup>16</sup>

Over the past decade, research has reached a consensus that social media has fundamentally reshaped the methodology of Islamic da'wah. Qualitative studies using netnography and digital discourse analysis have found that digital da'wah is characterized by the personalization of messages, high interactivity, and the emergence of new actors such as "celebrity ustaz" on social media who challenge traditional authority.<sup>17</sup> This transformation is not merely about the medium of delivery but also affects the form and content of messages, as well as the structure of religious authority, which has historically been hierarchical and institutional.<sup>18</sup> Research on the transformation of religious authority in the era of digital communication indicates that digital media generates new configurations of authority that are no longer based solely on institutional legitimacy, but also on communicative competence, closeness to the audience, and strategic interaction with social media algorithms.<sup>19</sup> These findings imply a shift from a hierarchical model toward a networked and relational form in which legitimacy is continually negotiated within the digital space.<sup>20</sup>

A study in Indonesia found that the widespread use of social media has triggered a fragmentation of internal Muslim religious authority, marked by the decline of traditional ulama and the emergence of millennial ustadz with a populist style who are active on social media.<sup>21</sup> However, other research offers a different perspective: that the presence of social media as a new model of da'wah does not displace the influence of traditional religious authority but rather further strengthens it. Through social media, traditional Islam remains the authoritative source of religious understanding for the majority of Muslim audiences. This highlights the complexity of the relationship between traditional

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<sup>16</sup> Fiska Raya Wulandari and Sri Hertimi. "Etika Komunikasi Islam Dalam Kampanye Public Relations Dakwah Di Instagram". *Journal of Innovative and Creativity (Joecy)*, 6, no. 2 (2026): 26228-34.

<sup>17</sup> Ni Made Yuliani, "Relasi Agama Dan Media Digital Transformasi Otoritas Keagamaan Di Era Komunikasi Virtual," *Jurnal Penelitian Agama Hindu* 10, no. 1 (2026): 104.

<sup>18</sup> Marwa Ulfa, "Transformasi Komunikasi Dakwah Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Praktik Keagamaan Masyarakat Muslim Di Indonesia," *NAHNU: Journal of Nahdlatul Ulama and Contemporary Islamic Studies* 2, no. 2 (2024): 385-399.

<sup>19</sup> Abd Hannan and Ach Fatayillah Mursyidi, "Social Media and the Fragmentation of Religious Authority among Muslims in Contemporary Indonesia," *Digital Muslim Review* 1, no. 2 (2023): 84-104.

<sup>20</sup> Ariyanto Iwan, "Dakwah Modern...", 327-336.

<sup>21</sup> Tamita Fatwana Yuna and Ahmad Tamrin Sikumbang, "Beyond Visuals: Komunikasi Dakwah Ustazah Halimah Alaydrus Di Instagram," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Indonesia (JSAI)* 4, no. 2 (2023): 160-77.

and digital authority, which requires further investigation, particularly within the context of Islamic boarding schools.<sup>22</sup>

Research on the transformation of da'wah communication and its impact on the religious practices of Muslim communities in Indonesia describes a significant shift in da'wah methods and media, which are now dominated by digital platforms.<sup>23</sup> The findings reveal changes in various forms of religious practice among Indonesians due to digitalization, with new spaces for interaction that connect religious figures and communities virtually. However, challenges regarding the authority and authenticity of religious messages must be addressed given the increasing diversity of da'wah content. A study on the digitalization and shift in Indonesian Muslim religious literature found that, in the post-truth era, Muslims tend to seek solutions to religious problems outside of traditional authorities due to three socio-religious factors: easy internet access that provides quick answers to daily problems; a growing religious fervor that is not balanced by good digital literacy; and instant solutions that lead to incomplete and partial understanding.<sup>24</sup>

A study on digital da'wah literacy on the @nuonline\_id account, owned by Nahdlatul Ulama, shows that the account has successfully reached 1.1 million followers and presents a variety of da'wah content ranging from Qur'anic verses and hadiths to news and health information, all presented in a creative and innovative manner.<sup>25</sup> This study concludes that the digital da'wah literacy of @nuonline\_id is quite effective in disseminating Islamic messages and reaching a wide audience. A study on the effectiveness of Instagram as a da'wah medium among @Ahilmanfauzi's followers, using a descriptive quantitative approach with 100 respondents, found that Instagram as a da'wah medium achieved an 83 percent effectiveness level and is classified as "highly effective". Instagram is used as an alternative medium for information and learning, featuring various light-hearted religious themes that are easily accessible and relevant to daily life.<sup>26</sup>

A constructivist qualitative study on followers' perceptions of @halimahalaydrus's da'wah content found that aesthetically pleasing and

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<sup>22</sup> Agustiani, Happy. "Digitalization and Social Da 'wah: Innovative Models of Islamic Community Development in the Era of Digital Transformation." *Al-Jamahiria: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Dakwah Islam* 3, no. 2 (2025): 195-209.

<sup>23</sup> Faiz Ichwanul Rizky et al., "Transformasi Metodologi Dakwah Dalam Era Teknologi Informasi," *Menulis: Jurnal Penelitian Nusantara* 1, no. 6 (2025): 624-629.

<sup>24</sup> Annisa Najmagita Andhara et al., "Hoaks Tentang Pesantren Di Media Sosial Dan Upaya Menangkalnya", *ISME: Journal of Islamic Studies and Multidisciplinary Research* 3, no. 2 (2025): 164-172..

<sup>25</sup> Zulfikar Ikrom and Muhammad Fauzan Nugraha, "Literasi Dakwah Digital..", 59-70.

<sup>26</sup> Marwa Ulfa, "Transformasi Komunikasi Dakwah...", 385-399.

personal content successfully fostered positive perceptions in three aspects: the cognitive aspect, involving an understanding of Islamic values; the affective aspect, involving positive emotions such as tranquility and emotional resonance; and the conative aspect, involving changes in religious attitudes and behavior. Prosocial interaction between the da'i and the audience plays a crucial role in fostering spiritual closeness in the digital space. Research on Instagram as a medium for da'wah: the influence of exposure to the @nihayaah.\_ account on adolescents' interest in Qur'anic study sessions indicates a positive and significant relationship between the level of exposure to da'wah content and increased interest among adolescents. These findings reinforce the relevance of digital da'wah as an effective means of conveying Islamic values that touch the heart and encourage personal transformation among the younger generation.<sup>27</sup>

Research on modern digital da'wah at the Al Multazam Integrated Islamic Boarding School in Kuningan shows that modern Islamic boarding schools utilize digital media to encourage virtue, remind audiences of the afterlife, and discourage wrongdoing through da'wah that is presented in a polished and modern manner. A study on the use of Instagram as a da'wah tool by students at the Sabilurrosyad Gasek Islamic Boarding School in Malang found that the use of Instagram is driven by the need to keep pace with technological advancements and to reach the younger generation in a visual and interactive manner. Da'wah strategies at the boarding school are implemented creatively and systematically by forming specialized teams for content creation, design, video editing, and account management; selecting relevant themes with light yet meaningful language; and consistently utilizing Instagram features such as Reels, Stories, and Live. Content types include "Ngaos Satu Menit" videos, text quotes, verses and hadiths, as well as excerpts from scholars' lectures, with positive audience response marked by high engagement.<sup>28</sup>

Digital da'wah faces substantial challenges, including the digital divide, the proliferation of religious misinformation, and the limited professional capacity of some da'i on social media. Recommendations from previous research include strengthening religious digital literacy, establishing professional standards for digital da'i, and strengthening community-based digital da'wah platforms. A study on the transformation of religious da'wah from traditional spaces to digital platforms in West Sumatra identified an urgent need for comprehensive digital literacy and da'wah training modules. Respondents stated that digital media has become one of the primary channels for conveying

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<sup>27</sup> Liza Nuarida Ulfah et al., "The Da' Wah Approach...", 108-121.

<sup>28</sup> Abd Hannan and Ach Fatayillah Mursyidi, "Social Media...", 84-104.

religious information, yet audiences also demand quality, relevance, and diversity in da'wah content.<sup>29</sup>

This study aims to fill this theoretical gap by positioning followers as the primary subjects of analysis rather than as passive objects. Through a qualitative-interpretive approach that adopts the perspectives of reception analysis and hermeneutics, this study examines how followers of the @tebuireng.online account understand, interpret, and internalize digital da'wah content in their daily lives. This approach differs from previous studies that focused more on sender-oriented analysis, such as da'i strategies or surface-level effectiveness measurements. Specifically, this study addresses three questions: what forms of da'wah content are presented through the @tebuireng.online account using content analysis with a visual and narrative analysis framework; what are the patterns of participation and interaction among followers using digital netnography to understand engagement patterns; and how religious understanding is formed through this digital da'wah using reception analysis to uncover interpretations and internalization.<sup>30</sup>

This study makes a theoretical contribution by developing a reception analysis framework within the context of digital da'wah by Islamic boarding schools, as well as a practical contribution to religious institutions in designing digital da'wah strategies that maintain scholarly integrity while remaining relevant to the needs of digital audiences. The findings of this study are expected to address the challenges of digitalization that lead to a partial and pragmatic understanding of religion by demonstrating how traditional authoritative institutions can touch the hearts of digital audiences without sacrificing theological depth.

## B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study design using reception analysis integrated with interpretive phenomenology. The study focuses on understanding how followers actively construct meaning from the digital da'wah content produced by the official Instagram account of the Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School, @tebuireng.online.

Although qualitative research does not manipulate variables as in quantitative research,<sup>31</sup> this study identifies three analytical dimensions: first, content characteristics, including format, visual elements, and narrative

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<sup>29</sup> Martin Slama, "A Subtle Economy of Time...", 94-106.

<sup>30</sup> Munawara, Andre Rahmanto, and Ign Agung Satyawan, "Pemanfaatan Media Digital ...", 29-45.

<sup>31</sup> John W Creswell and J David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Sage publications, 2017).

structure; second, audience reception patterns, encompassing dominant, negotiated, or oppositional readings, negotiated, or oppositional readings; and third, the outcomes of religious understanding are examined through five dimensions of religiosity according to Glock and Stark. These three dimensions are interrelated in the process of constructing the meaning of digital da'wah.

### C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on digital observation of the Instagram account @tebuireng.online, the account was found to utilize various Instagram features as a means of disseminating religious messages, including Reels, carousels, photo and video feeds, and live streams. During the observation period, the Reels format was the most dominant type of content published and received the highest level of engagement compared to other formats. The high number of views, comments, saves, and shares indicates that short-form video content is more effective at capturing followers' attention than other content formats.

In terms of message content, the published material is dominated by excerpts from religious teachings by clerics, moral messages, spiritual motivation, practical explanations of Islamic law, and documentation of pesantren activities. The material presented generally relates to issues close to daily life, such as etiquette in social interactions, social media ethics, the importance of seeking knowledge, interpersonal relationships, and the practice of worship. The material is presented concisely, highlighting key points that are easily understood by the digital audience.

Visually, the @tebuireng.online account consistently showcases the boarding school's identity through the use of logos, typography, colors, and documentation of activities that represent the environment of the Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School. Additionally, the inclusion of video clips of sermons by clerics and boarding school figures creates a sense of authenticity while reinforcing the credibility of the messages conveyed.

Meanwhile, from a narrative perspective, most of the content uses simple, communicative, and persuasive language. Messages are conveyed directly without overly technical terms, making them accessible to a diverse range of followers. INF03 explains that the published content is relatively easy to understand because it uses simple language closely aligned with people's daily experiences. Similar sentiments were expressed by several informants who noted that the concise presentation of material makes them more inclined to listen until the end.

These findings indicate that the characteristics of the da'wah content on the @tebuireng.online account are formed through a combination of engaging

visual formats, communicative language, and religious material relevant to the audience's needs. These characteristics serve as initial factors encouraging followers to access, understand, and interpret the da'wah messages conveyed through digital media.

Followers' perceptions of digital da'wah that the interview results indicate that followers of the @tebuireng.online Instagram account do not view da'wah content merely as religious information to be passively consumed. Instead, they construct various meanings based on personal experiences, spiritual needs, educational backgrounds, and the intensity of their interaction with the content they access. These differing experiences yield a variety of interpretations, demonstrating that the process of receiving digital da'wah messages is active and dynamic.

For the majority of informants, the @tebuireng.online account serves as an easily accessible medium for religious learning. Informants stated that the various content presented helped them gain new knowledge regarding Islamic law, ethics, and worship practices that they previously did not fully understand. INF01 revealed that they experienced a shift from a state of "not knowing" to "knowing more" after regularly following the published posts. A similar experience was shared by INF02, who admitted to gaining explanations regarding religious issues frequently encountered in daily life.

These findings indicate that social media functions not only as a communication tool but also as an alternative learning space that enables the public to access religious knowledge more quickly and flexibly. This ease of access allows followers to study religious materials at any time without physically attending conventional religious study sessions.

In addition to serving as a source of knowledge, da'wah content is also viewed as a means of strengthening spiritual awareness and maintain a close connection with religious values. Several informants explained that the content they view often serves as a reminder when they experience a decline in their enthusiasm for worship or face life's challenges.

INF05 explained that the teachings of religious leaders published via Instagram not only broaden their knowledge but also serve as reminders and motivation in carrying out daily activities. In line with this, INF06 stated that some of the content displayed resonates on an emotional level, prompting them to engage in self-reflection and improve their behavior. These experiences demonstrate that the meaning constructed by followers extends beyond the cognitive level to encompass affective aspects related to emotions, motivation, and religious consciousness.

Some informants interpret da'wah content as a practical reference for addressing various life challenges. Informants do not merely consume information for personal use but also utilize it as a reference when interacting with their social environment.

INF07, for instance, reported frequently using content published by @tebuireng.online as an initial reference when answering religious questions from congregants or the local community. According to them, the content provided is quite helpful in offering an initial overview of an issue before delving deeper through other, more comprehensive sources. This indicates that digital da'wah content is not merely viewed as material for individual consumption but also as a source of information that can be utilized in broader social and religious activities.

Although all informants accessed the same account, the study found that the process of accepting and interpreting da'wah messages did not occur uniformly. Each informant demonstrated a different level of acceptance based on their life experiences, religious educational background, and personal needs. The first group consisted of informants who demonstrated a high level of acceptance of the da'wah messages conveyed. Informants in this group viewed the @tebuireng.online account as a credible source of religious information that is also relevant to their needs. INF01, INF05, and INF06 belong to this group because they reported gaining benefits such as new knowledge, strengthened faith, and encouragement to apply religious teachings in their daily lives.

The second group exhibited a more selective pattern of acceptance. Informants in this group acknowledge the benefits of the content they receive but still make adjustments based on personal experience and needs. INF07, for example, considers Instagram content useful as an initial source of knowledge but still prioritizes in-person religious study sessions and scriptural analysis as deeper sources of learning. Thus, digital da'wah content is positioned as a supplement, not as the primary source of religious knowledge.

Meanwhile, the third group demonstrates a more limited level of acceptance. INF08 noted that the perceived influence was more evident in shifts in perspective rather than changes in religious practices. A similar view was expressed by INF04, who assessed that the benefits of the content are primarily in the form of motivation and reinforcement of faith without resulting in significant behavioral changes. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of digital da'wah is not uniform but is heavily influenced by individual characteristics.

Based on the interview findings, the religious understanding formed through interaction with @tebuireng.online content can be observed in several

interrelated forms, ranging from increased knowledge to the application of religious values in social life. These forms can be explained in the following table.

<b>Forms</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
First	Knowledge	Most informants stated that following the @tebuieng.online account increased their understanding of Islamic teachings, including religious rulings, moral values, etiquette, and everyday Islamic issues. They also noted that the concise and accessible presentation of the content helped them absorb religious information more easily.
Second	Belief and awareness	The da'wah content also strengthened informants' religious belief and awareness by motivating self-improvement and reinforcing their commitment to Islamic values through advice, teachings from religious figures, and moral messages.
Third	Social practice	For some informants, religious understanding was not limited to knowledge and awareness but was reflected in concrete practice. INF06 sought to apply Islamic rulings learned from da'wah content in family and community life, while INF01 reported a better understanding of certain religious provisions and attempted to implement them in daily activities.
Fourth	Social consequences	The religious understanding formed through da'wah content also influenced informants' social interactions. Several followers shared beneficial content with friends, family, or communities, while others used the knowledge gained as discussion material and as a reference in addressing religious issues within their surroundings.

Table 1. Forms of Followers' Religious Understanding

Thus, the research findings indicate that followers' religious understanding is formed through a complex process of interaction among digital da'wah content, personal experiences, religious backgrounds, and the intensity

of their engagement with the @tebuieng.online account. Therefore, the impact of digital da'wah cannot be understood as a uniform process; rather, it should be seen as an experience constructed differently by each individual according to their respective life contexts.

### **The Dominance of Reels Format in Digital Da'wah**

The finding that Reels is the most dominant content format with the highest engagement rate on the @tebuieng.online account can be understood through Henry Jenkins' New Media Theory framework on Participatory Culture. Jenkins explains that in participatory culture, the audience is not a passive recipient but an active prosumer involved in the production of meaning through participation—such as likes, comments, and shares—as well as collective intelligence through the exchange of knowledge in digital spaces. However, this finding reveals a critical nuance: while Reels content effectively captures the audience's attention within 30–60 seconds, there is a tension between algorithmic efficiency and theological depth.<sup>32</sup>

Analysis using Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model reveals that Tebuieng employs negotiated encoding – adapting traditional da'wah messages to popular digital formats without completely sacrificing substance. Hall explains that the sender of a message does not always succeed in communicating the intended meaning because the audience may engage in dominant, negotiated, or oppositional readings. In this context, Tebuieng selects the kiai's teachings, which are concise yet rich in meaning (moral messages, spiritual motivation) as a hybrid encoding strategy: maintaining traditional authority while remaining relevant to digital visual culture.<sup>33</sup>

A comparison with previous research indicates that these findings differ from Firdausy's study on @je.k, which found that non-institutional digital preachers often prioritize visual aesthetics over theological substance due to a lack of formal religious competence and a greater reliance on algorithmic popularity. However, these findings are also not entirely optimistic, unlike Nugraha's research, which asserts that the digitization of da'wah offers significant opportunities for religious literacy without anticipating the risk of fragmented understanding. A critical argument that arises is: do Tebuieng's Reels truly avoid the digital religious pragmatism identified by Muthohirin, where Muslims tend to seek instant solutions that lead to incomplete and partial understanding? INF03's findings regarding simple, easily understandable

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<sup>32</sup> Happy Agustiani, "Digitalization and Social Da'wah...", 195–209.

<sup>33</sup> Moh. Nor Ichwan et al., "Digitalization and the Shifting Religious Literature of Indonesian Muslims in the Era of Society 5.0," *Islamic Communication Journal* 9, no. 2 (2024): 245–266.

language support Nugraha's optimism, but do not address whether this simplicity comes at the expense of depth.<sup>34</sup>

From a theoretical contribution perspective, this study expands on Hall's model by demonstrating that, within the context of digital da'wah by pesantren institutions, encoding is not merely dominant or oppositional but rather a hybrid, negotiated form that maintains traditional authority while adapting to algorithmic logic. It also corrects Jenkins's optimism by showing that participatory culture does not automatically generate positive collective intelligence – it can also lead to fragmented understanding if content depth is not maintained.<sup>35</sup>

### Patterns of Followers' Interaction

The observations further indicate that Islamic communication extends beyond formal religious activities. Conventional approaches often associate Islamic communication with sermons, religious instruction, or institutional da'wah. However, the social interactions observed at Puncak Wakila suggest a broader understanding of communication in which Islamic values are expressed through everyday behavior, public interaction, and forms of social engagement.

The finding that followers interact through likes, comments, saves, shares, and tags—ranging from active participation (INF06, INF07) to passive consumption (INF04, INF08)—confirms Jenkins' framework on Participatory Culture and Collective Intelligence. Jenkins explains that prosumers engage in prosumption (consuming and reproducing content) as well as knowledge exchange through collective intelligence. However, a critical analysis through Hall's Encoding/Decoding reveals a profound dualism.<sup>36</sup>

The active interactions demonstrated by INF06, who commented, and INF07, who tagged friends, indicate true collective intelligence in which religious knowledge is exchanged and negotiated. ADM01 confirms that questions regarding Islamic law are answered by referring to valid sources, indicating a dominant reading from the producer's perspective, in which traditional authority is maintained. This confirms Hidayat's research, which found that the presence of social media actually reinforces – rather than displaces – traditional religious authority, as traditional Islam remains the authoritative source of understanding for the majority of the faithful. Through the lens of Glock and

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<sup>34</sup> Arnis Rachmadin, "Otoritas Keagamaan Di Era Media Baru : Dakwah Gus Mus Di Media Sosial," *PANANGKARAN, Jurnal Penelitian Agama Dan Masyarakat* 5 (2021): 150-169.

<sup>35</sup> Moh. Nor Ichwan et al., "Digitalization and the Shifting...", 245-266.

<sup>36</sup> H. Hurnawijaya et al., "Islamic Preaching on Social Media and Its Impact on Religious Attitudes: A Bibliometric and Systematic Review of Global Research," *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities* 7, no. 1 (2026): 1-22.

Stark, this active interaction demonstrates interconnected dimensions of intelligence (knowledge) and experience (spiritual experience).<sup>37</sup>

Conversely, the passive interactions demonstrated by INF04—who merely scrolls—and INF08—who accesses content only when needed—confirm the “digital religious consumerism” identified by Muthohirin, where Indonesian Muslims have become more pragmatic in seeking religious meaning through instant solutions. Through Hall’s lens, this indicates a “negotiated reading” where followers only accept content aligned with their personal needs, creating the potential for a religious echo chamber. A critical argument that arises is: does this pattern lead to the fragmentation of internal religious authority among Muslims, as identified by Muhaimin in his research on the transformation of da’wah communication, where millennial ustadz with populist styles challenge traditional ulama?

A comparison with previous research shows that findings regarding prosocial interactions that foster spiritual closeness confirm Huda’s research on @halimahalaydrus. However, the findings regarding passive followers contradict Zulhafiz’s optimism, who found an 83% effectiveness rate among @Ahilmanfauzi’s followers without accounting for passive consumption. Through the lens of Glock and Stark, passive followers exhibit a weak experiential dimension (no deep spiritual experience) and an unrealized consequential dimension (no behavioral change).<sup>38</sup>

From a theoretical contribution perspective, this study expands on Jenkins’ concept by demonstrating that participatory culture in digital da’wah follows a two-track trajectory: collective intelligence for active followers, but individualized religious consumerism for passive followers. It also expands on Hall’s model by showing that negotiated reading in a religious context can be problematic (accepting only what aligns with one’s preferences) rather than merely neutral.<sup>39</sup>

### **Levels of Followers’ Religious Understanding**

The findings of four levels of understanding (knowledge, motivation, perspective, and practice) directly confirm and operationalize Glock and Stark’s Dimensions of Religiosity, which consist of five dimensions: ideological (beliefs), ritualistic (practices), experiential (feelings), intellectual (knowledge), and consequential (behavior).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ariyanto Iwan, "Dakwah Modern...", 327-336.

<sup>38</sup> Abd Hannan and Ach Fatayillah Mursyidi, "Social Media...", 84-104

<sup>39</sup> Eva F. Nisa, "Creative and Lucrative Dawa...", 68-89.

<sup>40</sup> Tamita Fatwana Yuna and Ahmad Tamrin Sikumbang, "Beyond Visuals...", 160-77.

In the first dimension, the increase in knowledge indicated by INF01 and INF02—who acquired new knowledge about Islamic teachings and Islamic law—demonstrates an increased intellectual dimension of religiosity. Through Hall’s lens, this indicates a dominant reading in which followers accept meanings in accordance with the sender’s intent, namely valid religious knowledge from religious scholars. However, a critical argument emerges through Muthohirin: is this knowledge comprehensive or partial, as found in research on “autocomplete religiosity,” where Muslims seek instant solutions that are not comprehensive? A comparison with previous research suggests that these findings support Nugraha’s view regarding opportunities for enhancing religious literacy, but do not anticipate the risk of fragmentation identified by Pratama in the transformation of da’wah methodology.<sup>41</sup>

In the second dimension, the strengthening of spiritual motivation demonstrated by INF05 and INF06—who stated that the content “resonates deeply” and provides motivation—reveals an experiential dimension of religiosity characterized by a sense of closeness to God and spiritual peace. Through Jenkins’s lens, this indicates emotional prosumption, where followers not only consume but also emotionally internalize the content. Through Hall’s lens, this indicates a positive negotiated reading where followers accept parts of the content and modify it based on their personal emotional context. A comparison with previous research shows that these findings confirm Huda’s findings regarding positive affective perceptions—specifically, a sense of peace and deep emotion—toward @halimahalaydrus; however, they are more profound because they involve emotional internalization, rather than merely surface-level perceptions as in Zulfahiz’s study, which measured only questionnaire effectiveness.<sup>42</sup>

In the third dimension, the shift in perspective demonstrated by INF08—who experienced a change in perspective without a change in practice—reveals a complex negotiated reading through Hall’s lens: cognitive acceptance but rejection of implementation due to conflict with secular values or personal interests. Through the lens of Glock and Stark, this indicates a shifting ideological dimension—involving beliefs and perspectives—but ritualistic and consequential dimensions that remain unrealized due to the absence of practice. The critical argument that emerges is that this confirms Muthohirin’s concerns regarding incomplete and partial understanding in the post-truth era. A comparison with previous research indicates that these findings contradict

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<sup>41</sup> Guesty Tania, "Analisis Isi Pesan Dakwah Ustadz Hanan Attaki Di Media Sosial Instagram"

<sup>42</sup> Liza Nuarida Ulfah et al., "The Da' Wah Approach...", 108-121.

Nugraha's optimism – which did not anticipate a gap between knowledge and practice – but confirm Pratama's observation regarding the fragmentation of understanding in the transformation of digital da'wah.<sup>43</sup>

In the fourth dimension, application in daily life – as demonstrated by INF01 and INF06, who apply their understanding in daily life and explain it to others – reveals the consequential dimension of religiosity: behavior that follows beliefs and ritualistic practices of worship. Through Hall's lens, this indicates a complete dominant reading where followers accept the meaning and implement it. Through Jenkins' lens, this demonstrates productive collective intelligence where knowledge is disseminated to the community. A comparison with previous research shows that these findings are stronger than Zulhafiz's, who only measured 83% effectiveness without testing behavioral change, and confirm Hidayat's findings regarding the strengthening of traditional authority, as this implementation demonstrates trust in authoritative sources such as pesantren scholars.<sup>44</sup>

From a theoretical contribution perspective, this study operationalizes Glock and Stark in a digital context for the first time, demonstrating that the five dimensions of religiosity can be measured as outcomes of reception analysis of digital da'wah. It also integrates Hall and Glock-Stark by showing that reading positions (dominant/negotiated/oppositional) correlate with the depth of the manifested dimensions of religiosity.<sup>45</sup>

### Factors Shaping Followers' Reception

The findings regarding the four factors influencing understanding (intensity, background, emotional closeness, and relevance) can be analyzed through the integration of the three theories used in this study.<sup>46</sup> The first factor, exposure intensity, demonstrated by regular followers reporting greater influence, confirms Jenkins's view that high levels of participation yield deeper collective intelligence. However, a critical argument from Hall arises: is this a dose-response relationship or merely an exposure effect? A comparison with prior research indicates that this finding confirms Nugraha's perspective on optimizing social media for engagement, yet it does not anticipate the risk of low content depth.

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<sup>43</sup> Nafik Muthohirin, "Faith in the Digital Age: The Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism and the Plurality of Young Muslims Piety on Social Media", *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 19, no. 2 (2025): 199–233.

<sup>44</sup> Riska Maya Annisa and Lailatul Mukaromah, "Pemanfaatan Media Sosial...", 75–82

<sup>45</sup> Faiz Ichwanul Rizky et al., "Transformasi Metodologi Dakwah...", 624–629.

<sup>46</sup> Oki Ciputri et al., "Psikologi Pesan Dakwah Pada Komunikasi Publik: Pesan Dakwah Lora Ismael Al-Kholilie Di Instagram," *Liwaul Dakwah: Jurnal Kajian Dakwah Dan Masyarakat Islam* 15, no. 1 (2025): 163–175.

The second factor, religious background, is indicated by followers with prior religious education and reveals differing modes of reception, confirms Hidayat's view regarding the reinforcement of traditional authority. Through Bourdieu's lens, this demonstrates how cultural capital influences content consumption. A comparison with previous research indicates that these findings confirm Hidayat but contradict Pratama's optimism, who views digitalization as a leveling field that dismantles authority hierarchies.<sup>47</sup>

The third factor, emotional closeness to the pesantren, demonstrated by santri and alumni followers, indicating higher trust—confirms Hall's theory regarding a stronger dominant reading when there is a shared cultural context between sender and receiver. A critical argument that arises is: is this based on content quality or emotional attachment? A comparison with previous research shows that these findings confirm Hidayat's work but do not account for a blind spot regarding non-student followers who may receive the content differently.<sup>48</sup>

The fourth factor, the relevance of the material as demonstrated by practical content that is easier to understand, confirms Hall's theory of negotiated encoding—which considers the audience's context—and Jenkins's concept of relevance in participatory culture. The critical argument that arises is: does this lead to a "practicality trap" that sacrifices conceptual material? A comparison with previous research shows that these findings confirm Abdullah's argument regarding audiences demanding relevance, but do not anticipate the risk of marginalizing conceptual material as anticipated by Muthohirin. In terms of theoretical contribution, this study develops a hybrid reception model that integrates Hall (encoding/decoding), Jenkins (participatory culture), and Glock-Stark (religiosity) with contextual factors as moderators.<sup>49</sup>

### Theoretical Contributions and Implications

This study offers three significant critical theoretical contributions to the development of the field of da'wah communication and digital Islamic studies. First, this study develops a reception analysis model in the context of digital da'wah in Islamic boarding schools by integrating the works of Hall, Jenkins, and Glock-Stark, differing from previous research that focused solely on da'i strategies from a sender-oriented perspective or on quantitative, surface-level effectiveness.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ni Made Yuliani, "Relasi Agama Dan Media Digital...", 104

<sup>48</sup> Fiska Raya Wulandari and Sri Hertimi. "Etika Komunikasi Islam...",

<sup>49</sup> Diki Ardiansah "Resepsi Penonton Terhadap Gaya Bahasa Disfemisme Pada Dakwah Gus Iqdam Di Kanal Youtube Gus Iqdam Official." *PhD diss.*, UIN KH Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, 2025.

<sup>50</sup> Aan Herdiana, Yukhsan Wakhyudi, and Aswhar Anis, "MENJADI CONTENT CREATOR SANTRI" (Sketsa Media, 2023).

Second, this study corrects Jenkins' optimism by demonstrating that participatory culture does not automatically generate positive collective intelligence—it can also lead to individualized religious consumerism and echo chambers if there is no quality control from religious authorities. Third, this study expands on Hall's model by demonstrating that, within the context of digital da'wah in Islamic boarding schools, encoding is a hybrid, negotiated process that preserves traditional authority while adapting to algorithmic logic, and negotiated reading can be problematic, rejecting implementation that is not merely neutral.<sup>51</sup>

Building on these theoretical contributions, this study also offers critical practical implications for religious institutions in designing digital da'wah strategies. First, religious institutions should balance Reels with carousel and long-form content to counter algorithmic efficiency with theological depth, thereby addressing the fragmentation concerns raised by Muthohirin. Second, authority should be transformed from hierarchical to relational-dialogic to reduce the echo chamber by developing Jenkins' participatory culture more critically. Third, practical and conceptual content should be balanced to avoid the practicality trap by anticipating concerns from Muthohirin and Pratama. Fourth, develop critical religious digital literacy to address partial understanding by responding to Abdullah's recommendations.<sup>52</sup>

#### D. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the Instagram account @tebuieng.online uses various social media features to convey da'wah messages, with Reels as the most dominant format and the format with the highest engagement rate. Content characteristics that combine attractive visuals, communicative language, and religious material relevant to daily life are key factors in capturing followers' attention and facilitating their understanding of the conveyed da'wah messages.

The findings also indicate that followers' religious understanding is shaped through diverse reception processes. Followers interpret da'wah content as a source of religious knowledge, a spiritual reminder, and a practical reference in daily life. The level of acceptance of da'wah messages is not uniform but is influenced by the intensity of content access, religious educational background, emotional closeness to the pesantren, and the relevance of the material received. The understanding that emerges includes increased knowledge, strengthened religious awareness, the application of Islamic values in daily life, and the

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<sup>51</sup>Deni Kurniawan, Ahmad Mirzaq Miftahul Huda, and Moch Sulaiman, "Perbandingan Komunikasi Keagamaan...", 37–54.

<sup>52</sup> Alfiah Nurrohmah, "Efektivitas Instagram...", 90–96.

emergence of social impacts through the dissemination of religious knowledge to the surrounding community. Thus, digital da'wah conducted by Islamic boarding schools via Instagram not only serves as a medium for conveying religious information but also functions as a means of shaping religious understanding that strengthens the relationship between traditional religious authorities and the digital audience.

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