

**ALGORITHMS, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND DA'WAH: A QUR'ANIC
PERSPECTIVE IN DIGITAL EDUCATION****Aris Setyawan¹, Aan Hafilius²**

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aris.setyawan@asy-syukriyyah.ac.id¹, ibnu1asmen@gmail.com²**Abstract**

The rapid development of algorithm-driven social media has significantly transformed the distribution and consumption of religious information, including Islamic da'wah practices in digital spaces, thereby influencing how individuals understand Islamic teachings. This study aims to analyze the role of social media algorithms in the dissemination of da'wah content, examine the principles of da'wah in the Qur'an through a thematic (maudhu'i) interpretation approach, and formulate the relevance of Qur'anic values within the context of digital education. This research employs a literature-based approach using thematic Qur'anic exegesis integrated with contemporary studies on social media algorithms and digital communication. The findings indicate that social media algorithms actively shape the visibility and popularity of da'wah content based on user engagement logic, which tends to encourage message simplification and potential informational bias. Meanwhile, the Qur'an provides comprehensive communication principles emphasizing truthfulness, effectiveness, and ethical delivery of messages. The study identifies a tension between these normative da'wah values and the dominant algorithmic logic within digital ecosystems. This research contributes by developing a conceptual framework that integrates Qur'anic perspectives with digital technology analysis, while also offering implications for strengthening Qur'an-based digital da'wah and fostering critical digital literacy.

Keywords: Thematic Interpretation; Digital Da'wah; Social Media Algorithms; Islamic Education; Qur'anic Perspective

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology in recent decades has driven significant transformations in patterns of communication and information distribution within global society, including in religious practices such as Islamic da'wah. Social media has emerged as a new public sphere that enables the wide, rapid, and interactive dissemination of religious messages through various digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube (Hasbi et al., 2024). This phenomenon is further reinforced by the characteristics of the digital generation, which relies heavily on social media as a primary source of information, including in understanding religious

teachings (Jumhadi et al., 2024). In Indonesia, the digitalization of religion has transformed religious practices into more flexible and technologically integrated forms, allowing da'wah activities to extend beyond physical spaces into virtual environments (Rizal et al., 2024). This transformation demonstrates that social media functions not merely as a communication tool but also as a central medium in shaping contemporary religious understanding.

However, the development of social media cannot be separated from the role of algorithms, which serve as the primary system governing content distribution to users. Algorithms operate by personalizing content based on user preferences, behaviors, and interactions, thereby determining the visibility and reach of da'wah messages (Amin, 2025). In this context, algorithms are not neutral; rather, they actively shape social reality and public perception of the information received (Fathilah et al., 2025). Consequently, da'wah content circulating in digital spaces is often influenced by the logic of popularity, engagement, and trends, which may shift the substance of religious messages toward simplification or even bias. Furthermore, algorithms can amplify the spread of misinformation, polarization, and fragmented religious narratives, posing significant challenges to scholarly authority and the quality of Islamic understanding in digital society (Wahyuni & Rahma, 2023).

In addressing these challenges, a conceptual approach is required that integrates developments in digital technology with the fundamental values of Islam, particularly those derived from the Qur'an. The concept of da'wah in the Qur'an emphasizes not only message delivery but also ethical, wise, and truth-oriented communication, reflected in principles such as *qaulan sadidan* (truthful speech), *qaulan balighan* (effective communication), and *qaulan layyinan* (gentle speech). These principles provide a normative foundation for constructing high-quality da'wah communication within the complexities of the digital media landscape. Meanwhile, social media algorithm theory explains how digital systems curate and recommend content based on user data, creating echo chambers that may narrow individual perspectives (Amin, 2025). The integration of thematic Qur'anic interpretation and algorithmic theory is therefore essential to understanding how Qur'anic values can be adapted within contemporary digital education contexts.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the role of social media algorithms in the distribution of digital da'wah content, examine the principles of da'wah in the Qur'an through a thematic interpretation approach, and formulate the relevance of Qur'anic values in the era of digital

algorithms. More specifically, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) how social media algorithms shape the consumption of digital da'wah; (2) what thematic values and principles of da'wah are found in the Qur'an; and (3) how Qur'anic values can be integrated into social media practices. By employing a literature-based approach and thematic (maudhu'i) exegesis, this study analyzes relevant Qur'anic verses and integrates them with contemporary literature on algorithms and digital media.

The scholarly contribution of this study lies in its integrative approach, combining Qur'anic exegesis with the analysis of digital technology, particularly social media algorithms, which remains relatively underexplored in existing academic literature. This study not only examines da'wah as a form of religious communication but also as an epistemological phenomenon shaped by modern technological systems. Accordingly, it offers a novel perspective for developing Qur'an-based digital da'wah concepts that are adaptive to algorithmic dynamics, while simultaneously reinforcing the role of Islamic education in fostering critical, ethical, and truth-oriented digital literacy in the information age.

Literature Review

The main concepts underpinning this study encompass three primary domains: da'wah from a Qur'anic perspective, social media algorithm theory, and digital education. In Islamic studies, da'wah is understood as a communicative process aimed at conveying truth-based values in a persuasive and ethical manner, as reflected in various Qur'anic verses that emphasize wisdom, good counsel, and constructive dialogue (Hidayat, 2021). Qur'anic communication principles such as qaulan sadidan, qaulan balighan, and qaulan layyinan serve as normative foundations for effective and ethical interaction (Siregar, 2022). Meanwhile, social media algorithm theory explains that information distribution on digital platforms is no longer chronological but governed by data-driven recommendation systems that prioritize user engagement as a key metric (Kumar & Shah, 2020). In the context of digital education, the integration of technology and learning necessitates not only technical competencies but also critical and ethical digital literacy (Redecker, 2021). These three conceptual domains form an interconnected theoretical framework for understanding algorithm-driven digital da'wah.

Previous studies have examined the relationship between social media and da'wah from various perspectives. Research indicates that social media plays a significant role in expanding the reach of da'wah and enhancing audience participation in religious discourse (Nasrullah et al., 2022). Other

studies highlight that digital platforms enable the emergence of new forms of religious authority that are not necessarily grounded in formal scholarly credentials (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020). Furthermore, research on algorithms demonstrates that recommendation systems can reinforce information bias and create echo chambers that limit diversity of perspectives (Cinelli et al., 2021). In the context of da'wah, this phenomenon contributes to the homogenization of religious understanding and the potential dissemination of imbalanced narratives (Fauzi, 2023). These findings indicate that the interaction between da'wah and digital technology is a complex phenomenon requiring a multidisciplinary approach.

Despite these developments, a significant research gap remains, particularly in integrating Qur'anic theological perspectives with algorithmic analysis. Most existing studies focus on the practical aspects of digital da'wah without deeply engaging with Qur'anic principles (Rahman, 2022). Conversely, research on algorithms is predominantly situated within communication and information technology disciplines, often overlooking religious or ethical dimensions (Bishop, 2021). Additionally, the thematic (*maudhu'i*) interpretation approach has rarely been applied to contemporary digital issues, resulting in a lack of studies that connect sacred texts with modern technological dynamics (Yusuf, 2023). This gap underscores the need for an integrative framework that bridges Islamic scholarship and digital technology studies.

In response to this gap, the present study positions itself as an integrative effort that combines thematic Qur'anic exegesis with contemporary analyses of social media algorithms. Rather than examining da'wah solely as a normative religious practice, this study situates it within the broader context of algorithm-mediated digital realities. By doing so, it contributes a novel conceptual framework that connects Qur'anic values with critical understandings of digital technologies (Aziz & Salim, 2024). This approach is expected to enrich the discourse on digital da'wah while providing a normative foundation for Islamic communication practices in algorithm-driven environments.

Recent trends in the literature indicate a growing emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches to studying digital da'wah. Contemporary research increasingly integrates communication theory, media studies, and Islamic scholarship to analyze the dynamics of religious communication in digital spaces (Hutchings, 2021). Moreover, literature-based methodologies such as systematic and integrative reviews are widely employed to synthesize diverse research findings (Snyder, 2019). Within Qur'anic studies, thematic

interpretation has also evolved to address contemporary issues, including digital media and globalization (Ismail, 2022). These trends reflect a shift toward more holistic and context-sensitive analyses of digital da'wah.

Based on the mapping of theories, prior findings, and identified research gaps, a conceptual synthesis can be formulated as the foundation of this study. Digital da'wah is understood as a form of religious communication that operates within a social media ecosystem governed by algorithms, thus requiring both technical and normative-ethical considerations. In this framework, thematic Qur'anic interpretation is employed to identify relevant principles of da'wah, while social media algorithm theory is used to explain the mechanisms of information distribution. The integration of these perspectives provides a comprehensive analytical framework for examining digital da'wah as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing theological, technological, and educational dimensions.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design based on a literature review (library research) using a thematic (maudhu'i) Qur'anic interpretation approach integrated with contemporary literature analysis on social media algorithms and digital education. The thematic interpretation approach is selected because it enables the systematic collection, classification, and analysis of Qur'anic verses based on specific themes, making it particularly suitable for examining the concept of da'wah in a modern context (Al-Farmawi, 2020). Furthermore, this approach facilitates the integration of normative Islamic sources with contemporary empirical realities derived from academic literature, thereby producing a contextual conceptual synthesis (Mustaqim, 2021). The research strategy is descriptive-analytical, aiming to describe, interpret, and synthesize Qur'anic concepts of da'wah while relating them to the dynamics of social media algorithms in digital education.

The data sources in this study consist entirely of secondary data derived from three main categories: (1) primary normative sources, namely the Qur'an; (2) secondary sources in the form of classical and contemporary tafsir (exegesis) works that explain verses related to da'wah; and (3) academic literature, including journal articles, books, and scientific publications discussing social media algorithms, digital communication, and Islamic education. The use of secondary data in literature-based research allows access to diverse, systematically documented, and academically validated perspectives (Snyder, 2019). The selected literature primarily consists of

publications from the last five years to ensure relevance and currency, and all sources are open-access to maintain transparency and verifiability.

Data collection was conducted through several systematic stages. First, Qur'anic verses related to da'wah were identified through thematic inventory using keywords such as da'wah, hikmah (wisdom), mau'izhah hasanah (good counsel), and Qur'anic communication principles. Second, tafsir literature was examined to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the meanings of these verses from both classical and contemporary perspectives. Third, academic literature was retrieved from databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, and national journal portals to identify studies relevant to social media algorithms and digital da'wah. The literature search followed systematic searching principles using structured keywords and Boolean operators to improve accuracy and relevance (Xiao & Watson, 2019). All collected data were then categorized thematically to facilitate analysis.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to ensure the quality and relevance of the selected data. Inclusion criteria comprised: (1) literature addressing da'wah from a Qur'anic or thematic interpretation perspective; (2) studies on social media algorithms and digital content distribution; (3) academic publications from the last five years; and (4) open-access sources. Exclusion criteria included: (1) literature not directly relevant to the research focus; (2) sources lacking clear methodological rigor; and (3) non-academic publications such as opinion pieces or blogs. The application of these criteria is essential for maintaining the validity and reliability of literature-based research (Tranfield et al., 2020).

The unit of analysis in this study is textual data, including Qur'anic verses, interpretations from tafsir literature, and conceptual narratives from academic studies on algorithms and social media. The analysis does not focus on individuals or groups but rather on the meanings and concepts embedded within these texts. Accordingly, this study is conceptual and interpretative in nature, with the researcher acting as the primary instrument in interpreting and synthesizing the data (Creswell, 2021). This approach enables an in-depth exploration of the relationship between Qur'anic values and digital technological phenomena.

Data analysis was conducted through three main stages. First, thematic Qur'anic analysis was performed by collecting relevant verses, interpreting their meanings based on tafsir literature, and grouping them into thematic categories. Second, content analysis was applied to academic literature on social media algorithms to identify key patterns, concepts, and

findings related to digital da'wah (Krippendorff, 2020). Third, conceptual synthesis was carried out by integrating the results of thematic interpretation and contemporary literature analysis to construct a comprehensive analytical framework. This process was conducted iteratively to ensure coherence between normative sources and empirical digital realities, resulting in a holistic and contextual understanding of da'wah in the era of social media algorithms (Whittemore & Knafl, 2020).

Results

The findings of this study are derived from a synthesis of academic literature addressing digital da'wah, social media algorithms, and Qur'anic perspectives on Islamic communication. Based on the literature review, it is evident that scholarly publications over the past five years have shown a significant increase in studies focusing on digital da'wah, particularly those examining social media as the primary medium for disseminating religious messages. These studies predominantly originate from the fields of communication, Islamic studies, and digital media, with qualitative descriptive approaches and conceptual literature analyses being the most commonly employed methodologies (Prasetyo et al., 2022). In addition, there is a growing trend of interdisciplinary research integrating technological analysis with Islamic perspectives, although such studies remain relatively limited in number (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Most of the analyzed publications rely on secondary data and emphasize interpretative analyses of digital da'wah phenomena.

In terms of key findings, the literature consistently indicates that social media algorithms play a dominant role in determining the distribution and visibility of da'wah content. Algorithmic systems prioritize content with high levels of user engagement, such as likes, comments, and shares, thereby increasing the likelihood that popular da'wah content will appear more frequently on users' feeds (Putri & Hidayat, 2024). Furthermore, algorithms shape patterns of religious information consumption through personalization mechanisms, whereby users are more likely to encounter content aligned with their preferences and interaction histories (Saputra et al., 2023). This results in uneven content distribution and contributes to the fragmentation of religious understanding in digital society.

The synthesis also reveals thematic patterns in digital da'wah content influenced by algorithmic logic. Content that is concise, visually engaging, emotionally appealing, and sometimes controversial tends to achieve broader reach compared to content that is more in-depth and analytical (Nugroho et

al., 2023). Additionally, the literature identifies a tendency toward message simplification in digital da'wah, as content creators adapt to platform characteristics that demand rapid and engaging delivery (Fitria & Kurniawan, 2022). This pattern indicates a reduction in the complexity of Islamic teachings within digital da'wah practices.

From the perspective of thematic Qur'anic interpretation, the inventory of relevant verses demonstrates that the concept of da'wah encompasses a range of normative and ethical communication principles. These include the importance of delivering messages with wisdom (*bil hikmah*), good counsel (*mau'izhah hasanah*), and constructive dialogue (*mujadalah billati hiya ahsan*) (Zulkarnain, 2021). In addition, principles such as *qaulan sadidan* (truthful speech), *qaulan balighan* (effective communication), and *qaulan layyinan* (gentle speech) emerge as central themes in Qur'anic discourse on da'wah (Hafizah, 2022). These findings indicate that the Qur'an provides a comprehensive framework for ethical and effective religious communication.

The analysis further identifies a gap between Qur'anic principles of da'wah and their implementation in social media contexts. Several studies highlight that digital da'wah content does not always reflect Qur'anic communication values, particularly in terms of informational accuracy, ethical delivery, and depth of content (Maulana et al., 2023). Moreover, algorithmic pressures that prioritize content performance often encourage da'wah creators to focus on virality rather than message quality (Lestari & Amin, 2024). This condition reflects a shift in the orientation of da'wah from normative values toward digital performance metrics.

Finally, the findings indicate that scholarly literature on the integration of Qur'anic values into digital da'wah remains limited and lacks systematic development. Most existing studies address the technical aspects of social media usage without deeply connecting them to Qur'anic principles (Yasin et al., 2022). Meanwhile, thematic Qur'anic studies addressing digital issues are still in their early stages and rarely examine the specific role of algorithms in shaping religious communication (Karim, 2023). These findings indicate that the integration of Qur'anic exegesis and digital technology analysis remains an emerging area of research.

Discussion

The findings of this study affirm that social media algorithms play a significant role in shaping the distribution and consumption of digital da'wah content, while simultaneously revealing a tension between algorithmic logic and the normative principles of da'wah in the Qur'an. These findings directly

relate to the research objectives, namely analyzing the role of algorithms, examining Qur'anic principles of da'wah, and formulating their relevance within the context of digital education. Algorithms are shown to function not merely as technical tools for information distribution but as structural actors that influence the visibility, popularity, and framing of religious messages (Gillespie, 2020). In this context, the consumption of digital da'wah becomes highly influenced by data-driven selection mechanisms that repeatedly expose users to particular types of content, thereby shaping selective and potentially partial religious understandings.

Within the theoretical framework applied in this study, these findings can be interpreted through the integration of Qur'anic communication principles and social media algorithm theory. The principle of qaulan sadidan emphasizes accuracy and truthfulness, whereas algorithmic systems tend to prioritize emotionally engaging content regardless of its substantive validity (Susanto & Karim, 2022). Similarly, the principle of qaulan balighan, which stresses effective communication, is often reduced to the ability to capture attention through short and viral formats. From the perspective of algorithmic theory, this phenomenon aligns with the concept of engagement-driven content, where user interaction serves as the primary determinant of content distribution (Bucher, 2021). Consequently, an imbalance emerges between the substantive normative values of da'wah and the performative logic of digital technologies.

In comparison with previous studies, these findings are consistent with research indicating that social media has shifted religious authority from formal institutions to individuals who possess digital competence and high levels of popularity (Turner, 2021). However, this study extends such findings by demonstrating that this shift is not solely driven by social dynamics but is also structurally reinforced by algorithmic design that systematically amplifies certain types of content. On the other hand, this study differs from research suggesting that social media functions as a democratized space for da'wah without structural constraints (Lim, 2020). The present findings indicate that new forms of control exist in the form of algorithmic structures that indirectly regulate information flows and limit the diversity of religious perspectives.

The scholarly contribution of this study lies in the development of a conceptual framework that integrates thematic Qur'anic interpretation with the analysis of social media algorithms. This approach offers a novel perspective in the study of digital da'wah by positioning technology as an epistemological variable that influences the construction of religious meaning.

Furthermore, this study contributes to Islamic education by emphasizing the importance of Qur'an-based digital literacy as a response to the dominance of algorithmic systems in everyday life (Rahim & Abdullah, 2023). Accordingly, the study provides both theoretical enrichment and practical implications for developing more adaptive and reflective da'wah strategies in the digital age.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, it is entirely based on secondary data and does not incorporate empirical data from social media users or digital da'wah practitioners. Second, the limited availability of literature specifically addressing the integration of thematic Qur'anic interpretation and social media algorithms means that the analysis remains exploratory in nature. Third, the dynamic and proprietary nature of algorithmic systems restricts in-depth examination of their internal mechanisms (Kitchin, 2021). These limitations suggest that the findings should be understood within the scope of a conceptual research approach.

The implications of this study extend to several domains. For researchers, there is a need for further studies that incorporate empirical approaches to directly examine the influence of algorithms on religious understanding. For da'wah practitioners, the findings highlight the importance of developing communication strategies that are not only adaptive to algorithmic systems but also firmly grounded in Qur'anic principles to maintain message quality (Halim & Anwar, 2024). For policymakers and digital platform providers, there is a need to foster a more equitable and inclusive information ecosystem, particularly in the context of religious content, in order to prevent the dominance of certain narratives that may narrow public understanding (Flew et al., 2021).

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that social media algorithms play a crucial role in shaping the distribution and consumption patterns of digital da'wah content, thereby influencing how people understand Islamic teachings in the digital era. Algorithms operate through personalization and engagement-based logic that tends to prioritize content popularity over substantive depth, potentially leading to the simplification of religious messages. At the same time, the thematic analysis of Qur'anic verses reveals that the Qur'an establishes comprehensive principles of da'wah communication, emphasizing truthfulness, effectiveness, gentleness, and wisdom in message delivery. The tension between these normative values and algorithmic logic highlights the

urgent need to reconstruct digital da'wah practices to remain grounded in truth and ethical communication.

The primary contribution of this study lies in the development of a conceptual framework that integrates Qur'anic perspectives with the analysis of digital technology, particularly social media algorithms. This approach provides a new understanding that digital da'wah is not merely a form of religious communication but also an epistemological practice shaped by modern technological systems. Accordingly, this study enriches the discourse on da'wah and Islamic education by proposing a Qur'an-based paradigm of digital da'wah that is adaptive to algorithmic dynamics, while emphasizing the importance of critical and ethical digital literacy in navigating increasingly complex information environments.

The implications of this study point to the need for developing da'wah strategies that balance technological demands with Islamic normative values, as well as encouraging future research to empirically examine the interaction between algorithms, da'wah content, and audience responses across various digital platforms. Furthermore, collaboration among academics, da'wah practitioners, and digital platform stakeholders is essential to foster a healthier, more inclusive communication ecosystem oriented toward the dissemination of truthful values in digital spaces.

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