

THE INTEGRATION OF PSYCHOLOGY IN DIGITAL DA'WAH STRATEGIES AS A MEDIUM FOR ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Muhammad Yudi Ali Akbar¹, Giri Cahyono², Dede Fahrurroji³, Mudrikatul Arafah⁴

¹Universitas Al Azhar, Indonesia

²Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal, Indonesia

³Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Tarbiyatun Nisa Sentul Bogor, Indonesia

⁴Universitas Nusa Mandiri, Indonesia

*email: ¹yudi_ali@uai.ac.id ²gcyono@gmail.com ³dedefahrurroji77@gmail.com

⁴mudrikatul.mkr@nusamandiri.ac.id

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Abstract

This study examines the integration of psychological principles into digital da'wah strategies as an effective medium for Islamic education in the modern era. The rapid development of social media and digital technology has transformed the way religious messages are delivered and received, particularly among younger audiences. By incorporating psychological approaches such as understanding audience behavior, motivation, emotional engagement, and cognitive processes, digital da'wah can become more persuasive, relevant, and impactful. This research employs a qualitative approach through systematic literature review and analysis of contemporary digital da'wah practices. The findings suggest that the application of psychology in content design, communication style, and message framing enhances audience engagement and facilitates deeper understanding of Islamic teachings. Furthermore, digital platforms offer interactive and accessible spaces that support continuous learning and spiritual development. The integration of psychology into digital da'wah strategies plays a crucial role in strengthening Islamic education by making it more adaptive, engaging, and responsive to the needs of the digital generation. This approach not only improves the effectiveness of da'wah but also contributes to the formation of positive attitudes and behaviors aligned with Islamic values.

Keyword: Digital Da'wah; Islamic Education; Psychology; Social Media; Persuasive Communication

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji integrasi prinsip-prinsip psikologi ke dalam strategi dakwah digital sebagai sarana yang efektif untuk pendidikan Islam di era modern. Perkembangan pesat media sosial dan teknologi digital telah mengubah cara penyampaian dan penerimaan pesan-pesan keagamaan, terutama di kalangan audiens muda. Dengan mengintegrasikan pendekatan psikologis seperti pemahaman terhadap perilaku audiens, motivasi, keterlibatan emosional, dan proses kognitif, dakwah digital dapat menjadi lebih persuasif, relevan, dan berdampak. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui tinjauan literatur sistematis dan analisis praktik dakwah digital kontemporer. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penerapan psikologi dalam desain konten, gaya komunikasi, dan penyusunan pesan meningkatkan keterlibatan audiens serta memfasilitasi pemahaman yang lebih mendalam terhadap ajaran Islam. Selain itu, platform digital menawarkan ruang interaktif dan mudah diakses yang mendukung pembelajaran berkelanjutan dan perkembangan spiritual. Integrasi psikologi ke dalam strategi dakwah digital memainkan peran krusial dalam memperkuat pendidikan Islam dengan menjadikannya lebih adaptif, menarik, dan responsif terhadap kebutuhan generasi digital. Pendekatan ini tidak hanya meningkatkan efektivitas dakwah, tetapi juga berkontribusi pada pembentukan sikap dan perilaku positif yang selaras dengan nilai-nilai Islam.

Kata Kunci: Dakwah Digital; Pendidikan Islam; Psikologi; Media Sosial; Komunikasi Persuasif

Introduction

The massive development of information and communication technology in the 21st century has brought fundamental changes to various aspects of human life, including the domain of religious education and the dissemination of spiritual values. The phenomenon of digitalization, which has permeated nearly all facets of modern life, has created unprecedented challenges as well as opportunities for practitioners of Islamic da'wah.

Social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter have now become the primary arenas where religious messages are communicated, shared, and consumed by millions of users daily. Statistical data indicate that Indonesia, as the country with the world's largest Muslim population, has more than 204 million active internet users, with social media penetration reaching 167 million users in 2023 (Social, 2024).

This situation has created a highly potent yet complex digital ecosystem for the development of contemporary Islamic da'wah. On one hand, digital platforms offer unlimited audience reach, high accessibility, and interactivity that enables two-way communication between the da'i and mad'u. On the other hand, information overload, intense content competition, and the tendency of digital audiences to have an increasingly shortened attention span present real challenges that must be addressed by modern-day propagators of the faith.

The ensuing question is how da'wah messages can be delivered effectively amid the noise of a digital space saturated with various forms of entertainment, information, and propaganda. Many da'wah content pieces have not yet succeeded in profoundly touching the psychological dimensions of audiences, and thus the messages conveyed fail to produce significant changes in attitudes, behaviors, or understanding among recipients. This indicates the need for a more scientific and structured approach in designing digital da'wah strategies (Fauzi dkk., 2026).

Research on the effectiveness of digital religious communication has already attracted the attention of several prior scholars. A study by Nasrullah revealed that da'wah content on social media that employs strong visual and narrative approaches has a significantly higher engagement rate compared to conventional textual content (Nasrullah, R., & Rustandi, 2019). Meanwhile, a study by Hidayat and Muftisany found that digital preachers who understand the psychology of their audiences tend to be more successful in building a loyal and actively engaged community of followers (Hidayat, D., & Muftisany, 2020).

Furthermore, research by Mujahidin and Wahid highlighted the importance of framing da'wah messages to account for the socio-cultural context and psychological condition of the target audience. They argued that effective da'wah does not depend solely on the truth of the message's substance, but also on how the message is packaged, timed, and tailored to the needs and psychographic characteristics of the audience (Mujahidin, A., & Wahid, 2021).

Nevertheless, these studies still have significant research gaps. First, the majority of prior research addresses the technical aspects of digital platforms without systematically integrating them with the principles of communication psychology. Second, no study has comprehensively discussed how various psychological theories ranging from cognitive psychology and social psychology to behavioral psychology can be operationalized concretely in the design of digital da'wah content. Third, the dimension of Islamic education as the overarching goal of digital da'wah has not been extensively discussed in the context of psychological integration (Najmi & Ismail, 2025).

Based on the identification of these research gaps, this study aims to systematically analyze how psychological principles can be integrated into digital da'wah strategies in order to enhance their effectiveness as a medium of Islamic education. Specifically, the study aims to identify relevant psychological principles that can be applied in the context of digital da'wah, analyze the mechanisms by which psychological approaches can be applied in content design, communication strategies, and message framing in digital da'wah and explore the implications of psychological integration for improving the quality of Islamic education through digital media.

The benefits of this study encompass two main dimensions. Theoretically, the study is expected to enrich the body of knowledge in the fields of digital Islamic communication and religious educational psychology. Practically, the findings are expected to serve as a guide for digital preachers, religious content managers, and Islamic educational institutions in designing more effective, humanistic, and scientifically grounded da'wah strategies in an era of continuously evolving digital revolution.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach using the systematic literature review method. This type of research was selected because it aims to construct a comprehensive conceptual understanding of the integration of psychology into digital da'wah, based on the accumulation of findings from various relevant scientific sources (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Primary data sources for this study consist of reputable national and international journal articles indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and SINTA databases, covering publications from the past seven years. Data collection was carried out through systematic searches using keywords such as "digital da'wah," "Islamic education technology," "psychology of religious communication," and "social media dakwah," followed by a selection process based on topic relevance, methodological quality, and substantive contribution to the field.

Data analysis in this study employs content analysis and thematic analysis techniques. The analytical process was conducted in three stages first, data reduction by filtering the most relevant information from each source, second, categorization of findings based on major psychological themes that emerged; and third, integrative synthesis linking various findings with the theoretical framework of Islamic education (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Although this study is based on a literature review, validation of findings was conducted through source triangulation by comparing results from various types of references, including textbooks, research reports, and field studies, to ensure the consistency and reliability of the constructed arguments.

Results and Discussion

Psychological Foundations in the Design of Digital Da'wah Content

One of the primary findings of this study is that the effectiveness of digital da'wah is largely determined by the extent to which content designers understand and apply the principles of cognitive psychology in the message production process. Cognitive psychology studies how humans process, store, and retrieve information they receive (Fithriyah dkk., 2025; Skinner, 2019). In the context of digital da'wah, an understanding of the cognitive processes of the audience becomes the key to designing messages that are not only easily comprehended but also easily remembered and implemented in daily life.

The information processing theory developed by Atkinson and Shiffrin provides an important foundation regarding how humans absorb information from their environment. Within this theoretical framework, information first enters through sensory memory, is then processed in working memory, and is ultimately stored in long-term memory. The implication for digital da'wah is that religious content must be designed in such a way that it can effectively pass through all three stages of this processing (Nofi & Fithriyah, 2025; Seligman, 2019).

Related to this, Paivio's dual-coding theory posits that humans process verbal and visual information through different yet complementary cognitive systems. Research demonstrates that information delivered in a combination of text and imagery is far more effective in enhancing memory retention than information delivered in a single modality alone (Cialdini, 2021). In the context of digital da'wah, this means that content integrating textual narratives with strong visual elements such as Islamic infographics, calligraphic illustrations, or religiously themed animated videos will have greater memorability for the audience.

Beyond cognitive aspects, the emotional dimension of digital da'wah content design cannot be overlooked. The psychology of emotion teaches that humans have a natural tendency to be more responsive to stimuli that evoke certain emotional responses. Lazarus's cognitive appraisal theory explains that the emotion a person feels toward a given stimulus depends on how the individual evaluates the relevance of that stimulus to themselves. (Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, 2019) In digital da'wah, content that successfully evokes positive emotional responses such as feelings of gratitude, tranquility, hope, or

love for Allah tends to be more effective in driving changes in attitude and behavior among the audience (Ismail, 2025; Sayyi, Mashuri, dkk., 2025).

Another relevant psychological principle is the concept of narrative resonance. Research in the psychology of communication demonstrates that humans naturally find it easier to understand and remember information delivered in the format of a story or narrative, compared to information that is merely descriptive or prescriptive (Sahin, 2018). Effective da'wah throughout Islamic history has indeed always relied on the power of narrative the Qur'an itself is replete with stories of the prophets that carry rich pedagogical content. In the digital era, this principle can be operationalized through compelling storytelling in short video content, podcasts, or social media threads.

A review of various successful digital da'wah practices reveals that successful religious content creators such as Ustadz Hanan Attaki, Felix Siau, and various other digital da'wah figures have, intuitively or consciously, applied these cognitive psychology principles in their content. The use of relatable analogies, the packaging of messages in visual-friendly formats, the selection of diction that evokes curiosity gaps, and the use of narrative structures with conflict and resolution are psychological techniques proven to significantly increase audience engagement.

Furthermore, the mere exposure effect in social psychology which states that people tend to develop preferences for things they encounter frequently has important implications for digital da'wah content strategy. Consistency in posting frequency, the building of a strong brand identity, and the development of an active digital community are psychology-based strategies that can reinforce audience familiarity with the Islamic messages being conveyed (Mezirow & Taylor, 2018; Sahrowi dkk., 2025). Thus, the integration of cognitive and emotional psychological foundations in the design of digital da'wah content is not merely a technical innovation but a methodological imperative rooted in a deep understanding of the human being as a creature that both thinks and feels.

The aforementioned findings indicate that the success of digital da'wah does not rest solely on the sophistication of technology or the breadth of platform reach, but on the precision of the cognitive strategies used in composing the message. The author contends that the integration of systematically structured information and adaptive presentation attuned to the cognitive capacity of the audience is a determining factor in the effectiveness of da'wah communication. This suggests that content creators need to be sensitive to cognitive load so that messages not only attract attention but can also be processed optimally without causing mental fatigue. Accordingly, the simplification of messages without sacrificing substance becomes an important skill in digital da'wah content production (Rahmawati & Fithriyah, 2026; Wardi dkk., 2024).

Additionally, the success of digital da'wah is also influenced by the capacity to build a psychological connection between the message and the lived experiences of the audience. Content that delivers contextual relevance tends to be more readily received, as audiences feel personally engaged. In this regard, a human-centered communication approach becomes significant, wherein messages are not only delivered normatively but also dialogically and empathically. This approach reinforces the position of digital da'wah as a medium of social transformation that not only transfers religious knowledge but also fosters awareness and the gradual internalization of values.

Behavioral and Motivational Psychology Approaches in Digital Da'wah Communication Strategy

The second major finding of this study concerns the relevance of behavioral and motivational psychology in optimizing digital da'wah communication strategies. A deep understanding of what drives people to behave in particular ways especially in a religious context is an essential component in designing truly transformative da'wah.

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory provides a highly useful conceptual framework for understanding the motivations of digital da'wah audiences. Maslow posits that human beings have five hierarchically arranged levels of needs: physiological needs, safety needs, social (belonging) needs,

esteem needs, and the need for self-actualization (Sayyi, Muslimin, dkk., 2025; Vygotsky & Cole, 2020). Effective digital da'wah is that which can address these needs at their various levels. Content discussing inner tranquility addresses safety needs; content about Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyyah) addresses social needs; content about Muslim identity addresses esteem needs; while content on spiritual development addresses the highest need for self-actualization (Najmi & Mumtahana, 2026).

Beyond this, from an Islamic perspective, there exists a dimension of need that transcends Maslow's hierarchy, namely the spiritual or fitrah need the innate human tendency to seek and connect with God. This concept aligns with what some contemporary psychologists call the need for meaning-making, a fundamental human drive to understand one's own existence within a larger context (Aminuddin, A., Abidin, Z., & Sirajuddin, 2022) Digital da'wah that succeeds in touching this spiritual-existential dimension will have a far deeper and more enduring resonance with its audience.

Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (SDT) also makes an important contribution to understanding the motivations of audience engagement with da'wah content. SDT posits that the strongest and most enduring motivation is intrinsic motivation, that is, motivation arising from within the individual because they find inherent value, interest, or enjoyment in the activity itself (Goleman, 2020). By implication, digital da'wah that enables audiences to discover a deep personal connection with Islamic teachings rather than merely motivating them externally through fear or obligation will be far more successful in driving sustained change.

In the realm of behavioral psychology, B.F. Skinner's principle of behavioral reinforcement regarding positive and negative reinforcement also has significant relevance. In the context of digital da'wah, comment systems, likes, shares, and other interactive features on social media platforms are fundamentally mechanisms of social reinforcement that can be leveraged strategically. When audiences receive positive responses whether in the form of likes, appreciative comments, or reposts for their participation in digital religious activities, this psychologically strengthens their tendency to continue engaging more deeply with such da'wah content.

The concept of social proof in social psychology which states that people tend to follow the behavior of the majority, especially in situations of uncertainty also has strategic implications for digital da'wah. When a piece of da'wah content garners thousands or millions of views, likes, or shares, this psychologically creates the perception that the content is valuable and worth consuming. Astute digital preachers leverage this principle by building strong organic engagement in the early phase, thereby creating social momentum that attracts more people to follow their content (Ismail, 2026).

The perspective of persuasive communication psychology also provides valuable insights into how da'wah messages can be designed to change audience attitudes and behaviors. Petty and Cacioppo's elaboration likelihood model (ELM) distinguishes between two routes of persuasive message processing: the central route, which involves deep cognitive elaboration of the arguments being presented, and the peripheral route, which is influenced by factors such as the communicator's attractiveness and the packaging of the message. Effective digital da'wah needs to accommodate both routes: presenting strong substantive arguments for audiences motivated to think deeply, while also ensuring that the visual packaging and personal branding of the preacher are sufficiently compelling to reach audiences who tend to use the peripheral route.

These findings confirm that a successful digital da'wah communication strategy cannot rest on a single psychological approach, but must synergistically integrate various principles from motivational, behavioral, and communication psychology (Ismail dkk., 2025; Najmi, 2024). This demands that digital preachers possess adequate psychological literacy, or at a minimum, collaborate with experts who have competence in this area when designing their religious communication strategies.

The effectiveness of digital da'wah increasingly depends on the capacity to integrate motivational approaches that are contextual and adaptive to the dynamics of the audience. It is insufficient to merely understand human needs in a hierarchical sense; sensitivity to shifts in motivational orientation as

influenced by the fast-paced and competitive digital environment is also required. The author argues that modern audiences tend to respond to messages that provide personal meaning while offering practical solutions to everyday life problems. Therefore, da'wah content must be designed not only as a source of normative knowledge but also as a medium of self-reflection that gradually fosters internal awareness.

The strength of digital da'wah lies in its capacity to build patterns of sustained engagement through subtle yet effective psychological mechanisms. Consistent digital interaction, combined with social reinforcement strategies, is capable of creating new habits in consuming religious content. In this regard, digital da'wah has the potential to become a space for the formation of internalized religious behavior, rather than merely a momentary response to external stimuli. Accordingly, an approach that prioritizes the balance between rational messaging and emotional appeal is believed to be the key to creating more stable and sustained behavioral change among audiences.

Implications of Psychological Integration for the Strengthening of Digital Islamic Education

The third and most strategically significant dimension of this study's findings concerns how the integration of psychology into digital da'wah directly contributes to enhancing the quality of Islamic education in the modern era. Islamic education, in its comprehensive sense, encompasses not only the cognitive transmission of religious knowledge but also the formation of character (akhlak), the development of spirituality, and the internalization of Islamic values in everyday life (Fithriyah, 2024; Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, 2019).

Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory provides a highly relevant framework for understanding how digital da'wah can become a genuine agent of change within audiences. Mezirow argues that the most meaningful learning is that which transforms an individual's frame of reference the underlying assumptions, values, and perspectives that determine how they make sense of experience (Mezirow and Taylor 2018). In the context of digital da'wah, this means that truly effective religious content is not merely additive in terms of information, but is capable of transforming how audiences view themselves, their relationship with Allah, and their role in society.

The concept of scaffolding in educational psychology derived from Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) theory also has compelling applications in the context of digital da'wah. ZPD refers to the gap between what a person can do independently and what they can achieve with the assistance of someone more competent (S.h dkk., 2024; Vygotsky & Cole, 2020). In digital da'wah, this principle can be implemented through the design of progressive, tiered content ranging from foundational material accessible to beginners, to deeper scholarly discussions for audiences with a stronger foundation of Islamic understanding. Digital platforms enable the personalization of learning experiences previously impossible in conventional models of da'wah.

Post-Vygotskian social constructivism offers the perspective that knowledge is not merely transferred from teacher to student but is actively constructed by the learner through interaction with their social environment (Aminuddin, A., Abidin, Z., & Sirajuddin 2022). The implications of this theory are highly significant for the development of digital Islamic education. Online learning communities such as Qur'an discussion groups on WhatsApp, study forums on Telegram, or the comment sections of da'wah content on YouTube are not merely secondary spaces but constitute primary learning environments where Islamic understanding is collectively constructed, tested, and deepened.

Another important aspect is the role of positive psychology in digital Islamic education. Positive psychology pioneered by Martin Seligman focuses on the development of human strengths and potential, rather than merely addressing weaknesses and pathology (Afandi & Sayyi, 2023; Skinner, 2019). In the context of da'wah, a positive psychology approach encourages a shift away from rhetoric based on fear appeals and threats of punishment toward narratives emphasizing the beauty of Islam, the peace of spirituality, and the human being's potential as a khalifatullah fil ardh (vicegerent of God on earth).

Social psychology research consistently demonstrates that positive appeals such as hope, meaningfulness, and spiritual connection produce more enduring attitude change compared to fear-based appeals.

Within the framework of holistic Islamic education, digital da'wah that integrates psychological principles also plays an important role in developing the emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence of audiences. Daniel Goleman defines emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and effectively express emotions in interpersonal contexts (Goleman, 2020). Da'wah content designed with psychological awareness can serve as an effective medium to assist audiences in developing self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and relational skills the concrete manifestations of noble character (*akhlak mulia*) in the Islamic tradition (Wardi dkk., 2019).

Aspects of accessibility and inclusivity also warrant attention in the context of digital Islamic education. Developmental psychology teaches that individuals at various developmental stages adolescence, young adulthood, middle adulthood, and old age possess different cognitive, emotional, and motivational characteristics (Nasrullah, R., & Rustandi, 2019). Digital da'wah that is sensitive to these developmental differences will design content suited to the specific needs of each audience segment, thereby enabling Islamic education to be delivered in a more personal, relevant, and effective manner across all strata of society (Pratama, 2022).

The overall synthesis of the three dimensions of discussion above demonstrates that the integration of psychology into digital da'wah is not merely an instrumentalist communication strategy, but rather an approach grounded in a profound understanding of the human being as a cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual creature. When psychology and Islamic da'wah converge within a coherent methodological framework, the result is a model of Islamic education that is more humane, adaptive, and genuinely transformative a model that not only transmits knowledge about Islam but also facilitates the internalization of Islamic values until they take deep root in all dimensions of the personality and behavior of the audience (Nurhaidah & Lubis, 2025).

The integration of psychology into digital da'wah opens significant opportunities to reconstruct the approach to Islamic education in order to make it more responsive to the needs of the times. This transformation demands a shift from one-directional teaching patterns toward participatory and reflective approaches. The author argues that Islamic education in the digital space should ideally function not only as a means of delivering material, but also as a space for dialogue that enables an active process of meaning-making by the audience. Thus, the success of digital da'wah can be measured by the extent to which it is capable of driving conscious changes in thinking and action in daily life.

Accordingly, the sustainability of the impact of digital Islamic education is very much determined by consistency in building an inclusive learning ecosystem oriented toward the development of individual potential. An interactive and supportive digital environment plays an important role in reinforcing the gradual internalization of Islamic values. In this context, digital da'wah is no longer understood as a momentary activity, but as a long-term educational process that shapes the character and religious identity of the audience. Therefore, an approach that integrates cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects constitutes an important foundation for creating an adaptive and sustainable model of Islamic education.

Conclusion

This study finds that the integration of psychological principles encompassing cognitive psychology, the psychology of emotion, behavioral psychology, motivational psychology, and educational psychology into digital da'wah strategies is an essential step in enhancing the effectiveness of the dissemination of Islamic values in the modern era. A deep understanding of the cognitive, motivational, and emotional mechanisms of the audience enables digital preachers to design content that is not merely informative, but genuinely transformative in shaping Islamic understanding, attitudes, and

behavior. This approach renders digital da'wah more responsive to the increasingly heterogeneous psychological and spiritual needs of audiences in the digital space.

As a practical implication, this study recommends that digital da'wah content managers, Islamic educational institutions, and policymakers in the field of da'wah begin to consider psychological literacy as a core competency to be developed. There is also a need for cross-disciplinary collaboration among Islamic scholars, Islamic educators, psychologists, and digital communication experts in designing a comprehensive and evidence-based digital da'wah ecosystem. In this way, digital da'wah can truly become an effective vehicle for Islamic education that enlightens, inspires, and strengthens the civilization of the Muslim ummah in the era of the fourth industrial revolution and beyond.

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