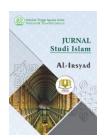


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AN IRSHAD-BASED APPROACH IN THE DIGITAL AGE THROUGH THE DHIKR PRACTICES OF HABIB LUTHFI BIN YAHYA

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Spiritual Guidance, Digital Media, Habib Luthfi bin Yahya.



Habib Luthfi bin Yahya's use of digital technology in disseminating dzikir has expanded the reach of Islamic preaching, created virtual spiritual communities, and strengthened religious interactions in an interactive and trustworthy manner. This study analyzes Habib Luthfi bin Yahya's utilization of digital media to spread dzikir and provide spiritual guidance to the broader public engagingly and interactively. The research employs a qualitative approach and literature review, collecting data through documentation from various books, journals, and relevant online articles. The research findings indicate that da'wah in the digital era must adapt methods, content, and media to align with technological advancements and societal needs. The irsyad approach, which emphasizes personal relationships, effectively addresses psychological and spiritual issues. Dzikir therapy helps foster inner peace and closeness to God. Habib Luthfi bin Yahya serves as a model of a moderate scholar who wisely utilizes digital media to spread peaceful Islamic messages. Through online platforms, he builds spiritual communities and raises religious awareness across generations. This da'wah model combines Sufi values and Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah ethics, creating tolerant content strengthening an inclusive Islamic identity. Conclusion: Digital technology is effective for Islamic preaching; scholars like Habib Luthfi spread Islam widely and profoundly through digital platforms.

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A. INTRODUCTION

The practice of dhikr (remembrance of God) is a form of worship aimed at attaining spiritual awareness and closeness to the Divine through the continuous repetition of sacred phrases, either verbally or silently (Sejin, 2023). Dhikr can be performed individually or collectively, particularly within Sufi circles such as tarīqah or majelis dhikr, strengthening social bonds and collective identity (Munsoor & Munsoor, 2017). Beyond its spiritual benefits, dhikr has been shown to positively impact mental and physical health by reducing stress and



enhancing inner peace. Neurological studies indicate that the practice of dhikr exerts effects similar to meditation on brain function (Zahir & Qoronfleh, 2025). Moreover, dhikr shares commonalities with other spiritual practices such as the Jesus Prayer in Hesychasm, emphasizing repetitive prayer's transformative power (Hisamatsu, 2024).

Dhikr, characterized by the repeated utterance of the names of Allah, functions not only as a spiritual discipline but also as a medium for conveying religious messages and enhancing subjective well-being. Research has demonstrated a positive correlation between the intensity of dhikr and subjective well-being, reflected in greater life satisfaction and positive emotional states among practitioners (Hamsyah & Subandi, 2017). As a medium of da'wah (Islamic propagation), dhikr deeply embeds religious values through repetition that resonates with daily life. The effectiveness of da'wah through dhikr increases when adapted to the social and cultural contexts of the community, thereby rendering the message more relevant and impactful (Mappaselleng & Sabri, 2018). The cultural adaptability of dhikr makes it a flexible and effective tool for religious communication across diverse communities.

The development of Islamic da'wah in the digital era marks a significant transformation from traditional face-to-face methods to digital platforms such as social media, websites, and mobile applications, which enable the dissemination of Islamic teachings beyond geographical boundaries and reach broader audiences (Raya, 2024). Interactive approaches to da'wah on social media have effectively engaged younger generations, enhancing their understanding and ideological development about Islamic teachings (Zafri et al., 2023). However, the success of digital da'wah heavily depends on the quality and delivery of content, which must be clear, engaging, and relevant to contemporary issues. Millennials, in particular, increasingly access religious content through social media, which has become a primary source of religious knowledge (Zaenur, 2025; Sikumbang et al., 2024). This transformation presents both opportunities and challenges for modern da'wah.

The emergence of new religious authorities in the digital era is marked by the rise of celebrity preachers who utilize digital platforms to blend religious messaging with personal branding, thereby creating new forms of religious authority and expanding their follower base (Raya, 2025; Dahlan et al., 2025). However, this phenomenon also leads to the commodification of religion, where preachers disseminate religious teachings and develop business ventures. On the other hand, anonymity and the lack of regulation in the digital realm open space for spreading extremist ideologies and misinformation, posing a significant challenge to maintaining the integrity of Islamic teachings online (Kurmanaliyev et al., 2025). Precise governmental regulation is needed to address these concerns and promote harmonious messaging. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift of religious education into digital spaces, demanding new paradigms and authorities in religious instruction (Kholili et al., 2024; Maemonah et al., 2022). Adaptive Islamic da'wah strategies that respond to social and technological changes post-COVID-19, particularly through digital media, are essential for effectively reaching the broader Muslim community (Baidowi & Salehoddin, 2021).

The study by Nizam Bin Abd Aziz et al. (2023) demonstrated that the Portable Digital Tasbih system can assist in maintaining consistency in dhikr, reducing distractions, storing data on the cloud, and motivating users through visualization and online sharing features. Furthermore, Simamora and Farid (2024) revealed that Islamic broadcasters face challenges in

balancing the broad dissemination of teachings while preserving theological integrity on social media. Therefore, a balanced approach is necessary to ensure that digital da'wah remains aligned with Islamic values such as tawhid, adab, and communication ethics. Meanwhile, Mamat and Zarif (2019), in their research on the manuscript *Tibyān al-Marām*, found that dhikr is highly recommended for students as it provides spiritual benefits, enhances memory, and opens the doors to sustenance, thus underscoring the importance of dhikr within the Islamic educational tradition.

Previous studies have examined digital prayer beads (tasbih) as a tool to maintain consistency in dhikr, the challenges of digital da'wah in preserving theological integrity, and the significance of dhikr in classical Islamic education. However, there has been no comprehensive study integrating the approach of spiritual guidance (irsyad), dhikr therapy, and value-based Sufi digital da'wah strategies. This research offers novelty by highlighting moderate da'wah centered on dhikr as exemplified by Habib Luthfi bin Yahya, presenting it as a relevant model of spiritual da'wah in the digital era. This integration creates a more holistic da'wah approach that addresses emotional, spiritual, and technological dimensions, while reinforcing values of tolerance and peace within pluralistic societies.

The study aims to examine the irsyad-based da'wah model developed by Habib Luthfi bin Yahya, which combines dhikr, spiritual guidance, and digital media moderately. The findings indicate that this da'wah approach effectively reaches the emotional and spiritual aspects of the community, especially the younger generation, through peaceful, tolerant, and contextual content. Furthermore, this approach strengthens an inclusive Islamic identity in the face of the digital information flow. Consequently, this da'wah model can serve as a reference for formulating more ethical, relevant, and responsive contemporary da'wah strategies that address the challenges posed by extremist ideologies in the digital age.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method as the basis for analyzing and explaining the research topic thoroughly and systematically. The literature review was chosen because it allows the researcher to gather information from relevant written sources, such as books, classical and contemporary texts, scientific journals, and articles from credible websites. This approach aims to examine the Irshad approach in the digital era through the dhikr practices of Habib Luthfi bin Yahya as part of a Sufi da'wah contextualized with the development of information technology. The data collection method was carried out through documentation techniques, namely by collecting and reviewing various references that align with the focus of the study. This process includes identifying, selecting, and analyzing sources directly related to the research theme. Once the data is collected, the analysis is conducted through three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction aims to filter information, group data based on its relevance to the research title and objectives, and eliminate irrelevant data. The reduced data is presented in concise, clear, and structured explanations to ensure systematic understanding. This presentation aims to provide a comprehensive picture of Habib Luthfi's da'wah practices in the digital context. The final stage concludes by formulating the overall results of the literature review to provide a complete understanding of the object of study and to answer the research questions.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Da'wah Strategies in the Digital Era

Da'wah strategies in the digital era involve utilizing various technological platforms to reach broader audiences, particularly younger generations. Social media platforms such as YouTube have become popular for delivering da'wah messages due to their flexibility, allowing access anytime and anywhere (Briandana et al., 2020). Instagram is also used with a relaxed and humorous approach, making da'wah messages less didactic and easier to accept (Sholihah & Rohmatulloh, 2023). In this regard, preachers must possess technological proficiency and strong religious understanding. Furthermore, podcasts have emerged as an effective alternative da'wah medium amid high societal mobility, enabling flexible audio-based delivery of religious content (Hidayah, 2021). Another strategy includes digital broadcasting of traditional Islamic teachings, such as recitations of classical texts (kitab kuning) via platforms like YouTube. This method overcomes spatial and temporal limitations and broadens public access to Islamic knowledge (Istiqomah et al., 2025).

Digital da'wah strategies also involve the creation of interactive content, such as Islamic-themed animations like "Ustadz dalam Animasi" and "Stories of the Prophets," which effectively attract the attention of younger audiences (Hamzah et al., 2023). Da'wah is further strengthened through community-based education by leveraging platforms such as Zoom for regular study sessions, particularly for migrant communities (Afidah et al., 2024). Efforts to prevent radicalism employ contextual approaches tailored to millennial characteristics, such as ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah da'wah activities on media and intensive mentoring (Hasanah et al., 2024). However, digital da'wah faces challenges including anonymity and lack of oversight, which risk spreading extremist ideologies. Therefore, maintaining ethical and religious awareness is crucial (Sikumbang et al., 2024).

Da'wah in the digital era has undergone a significant transformation, especially within the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Nahdhiyah (ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah) movement. Previously focused on traditional communities, da'wah now targets millennials familiar with digital technology. Adaptation to social media and online platforms has become a strategic necessity to effectively convey Islamic teachings (Hasanah et al., 2024). Ideological reinforcement is conducted through educational programs, cadre development, and intensive mentoring to shield youth from radical ideologies. While digital media provides extensive opportunities for da'wah dissemination, it also presents challenges related to the spread of extremist ideologies. Thus, adaptive and contextual approaches are required. Digital transformation has become a significant trend globally, with 75% of organizations having digital roadmaps by 2023 (Ettridge, 2023; Brinkley, 2023). In the future, da'wah strategies must be sustainable, ethical, and aligned with the dynamics of digital communication (Murugesan, 2021; Harwahyu et al., 2022).

The advancement of digital technology has transformed Islamic da'wah methods into more adaptive and practical approaches to reach younger generations. Da'wah through YouTube platforms, as practiced by Ustadz Hanan Attaki, has increased interest and religious understanding among young audiences in the digital era (Muharrifah & Sikumbang, 2025). Audience responses to the da'wah of Gus Miftah, delivered via digital

media, have been analyzed using the encoding-decoding theory to comprehend message meanings within marginalized social spaces (Inun et al., 2025). The da'wah content of Ustadz Adi Hidayat on YouTube also positively influences students' religious behavior (Fadhli & Nashrillah, 2025). Individuals and institutions such as Masjid Sejuta Pemuda utilize digital media as an interactive means of spreading Islamic values (Kholifah & Hikmah, 2024). Social media plays a vital role in deepening religious understanding among Generation Z (Jalaluddin et al., 2024).

2. Irsyad Da'wah Approach / Spiritual Guidance

The da'wah approach based on spiritual guidance emphasizes integrating emotional and spiritual intelligence in effectively conveying Islamic teachings. This approach avoids confusion, rejection, or hatred towards the da'wah message. Mohammad Natsir, in his concept of *fiqh al-da'wah*, stresses the significance of wisdom (*hikmah*), emotional bridges, and *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul) as the foundation of sustainable da'wah (Abdullah, 2017). Morality and ethics are also crucial aspects in shaping the preacher's character. Communication skills, such as precise delivery, active listening, and adjusting the message according to the audience's level of understanding, are essential (Aini & Don, 2022). Contemporary approaches include non-verbal communication as applied by Said Nursi in *Risāla al-Nūr* (Mohd Noor et al., 2022) and ecological interactions that respond to social issues in society (Muchtar & Alam, 2019).

Islamic spiritual guidance emphasizes the importance of self-awareness and soul discipline as initial steps toward achieving moral and intellectual perfection. This process involves inner transformation through spiritual guidance from human mentors and divine life trials (Ali, 2023). In Islamic tradition, a spiritual guide or *murshid* is vital to accompany individuals on their spiritual journey. Their presence strengthens spiritual bonds and aids in attaining the status of *insān kāmil* (perfect human spiritually) (Wirianto et al., 2023). Moreover, the Islamic spiritual guidance approach has been integrated into modern mental health therapy, such as the Traditional Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy (TIIP) model, which combines Islamic spiritual interventions with cognitive and emotional therapies, proving effective in reducing psychological disorders among Muslim patients (Khan et al., 2023).

The Islamic spiritual guidance approach is applied in the personal realm and extends to education and community fields. In educational settings, counselors utilize Islamic teachings to assist students through individual and group counseling (Situmorang, 2017). In leadership, the Islamic spiritual approach emphasizes ethical responsibility, continuous learning, and service-oriented leadership. This model integrates spiritual values, ethics, and social responsibility within educational and organizational leadership contexts (Lahmar, 2024; Mohamed et al., 2021). More broadly, spiritual guidance also plays a significant role in socio-political organizations, aiming to achieve spiritual and socio-political excellence through Islamic principles such as the victory of truth over falsehood and the eradication of injustice (Ali & Abdollahi, 2024). This approach demonstrates the profound role of spirituality in shaping societal order.

3. Dhikr Therapy

Therapy is a professional assistance process aimed at helping individuals overcome various psychological, emotional, and behavioral disorders they experience. Multiple

approaches can be utilized in this process, such as cognitive therapy, behavioral therapy, humanistic therapy, and family systems therapy, tailored to each client's specific needs. The success of therapy is greatly influenced by the quality of interaction between therapist and client and the extent to which the client is engaged and motivated throughout the therapeutic process. Through therapy, individuals are equipped with new insights, practical skills, and adequate emotional support to face life challenges. Therapy focuses on managing psychological problems and opens pathways for healthier and more positive personal development. Self-understanding is one of the essential outcomes of therapy, ultimately encouraging behavioral changes and improvements in overall quality of life. In the long term, when conducted with an appropriate approach and active cooperation between client and therapist, therapy can effectively achieve consistent and sustainable psychological well-being.

In a broader scope, therapy is also understood as a process of spiritual recovery related to mental health, primarily through religious approaches. One widely applied form of treatment is religious therapy, which integrates Islamic teachings such as the Qur'an, Hadith, and spiritual principles as the basis for psychological healing. This therapy aims to address feelings of anxiety, stress, depression, and other mental disorders. A prominent practice within religious therapy is *dzikr*, which involves the repetition of Allah's names as a means to attain inner peace. Dzikr is believed not merely as a verbal activity but also as an effort to enhance spiritual awareness and remembrance of Allah's laws. This practice builds inner strength, reconnects individuals with their Creator, and awakens consciousness of Allah's greatness and control over life. By strengthening spiritual relationships, dzikr serves as a reminder and a path to achieving the tranquility of the soul and guiding life toward greater meaning. This approach reflects the integration of psychological healing and faith in achieving mental well-being.

Dzikr therapy is a spiritual method involving the repetitive utterance of Allah's names, such as *tasbih*, *tahmid*, *tahlil*, and *istighfar*, with deep intention to seek inner calmness. This repetition is performed verbally and mentally, usually after prayers, during moments of anxiety, or as part of daily routines. The practice encourages reflection on the meaning of each utterance and increases awareness of Allah's presence in everyday life. Research indicates that dzikr can reduce stress levels, alleviate anxiety symptoms, and enhance feelings of peace and focus. In therapy, dzikr is applied systematically, such as through meetings that discuss the meanings and methods of dzikr, followed by group practice and implementation in daily life. Individuals are invited to memorize the recitations, understand their content, and contemplate the spiritual meanings behind each phrase. Thus, dzikr serves not only as a means of mental healing but also as a tool to deepen spirituality, develop strong character, and guide individuals toward a calmer, more purposeful, and meaningful life by Islamic teachings.

4. The Da'wah of Habib Luthfi bin Yahya in the Digital Era

In today's digital era, online media has become an effective means for moderate preachers to convey balanced Islamic values. These preachers emphasize an Islamic approach rooted in the ulama's scholarly heritage and the Prophet Muhammad's teachings (peace be upon him). By adhering to strong and contextual scholarly values, they can present Islam in a moderate, non-extreme manner that remains relevant to modern society.

Social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook serve as strategic tools to reach the younger generation, active digital technology users. Preachers build supportive and inclusive communities through creative content such as preaching videos, Islamic quotes, or interactive Q&A sessions. They reject excessive or deviant interpretations and promote values of justice, compassion, and tolerance. Moderate preachers are essential in maintaining harmony between religious teachings and social realities, serving as role models in practicing Islam peacefully and wisely. In this context, digital media not only facilitates the dissemination of religious messages but also opens up opportunities for rapid, cost-effective preaching that can cross geographical and cultural boundaries.

Despite these opportunities, moderate preachers also face serious challenges in the digital realm. One major challenge is the spread of extremist religious narratives and misleading information through social media. To address this, these preachers improve their digital literacy, develop effective communication strategies, and actively correct misunderstandings through dialogical and persuasive approaches. Their role extends beyond delivering religious material to serving as moral guardians of society by promoting values of peace and unity. Moderate preachers act as agents of change in shaping an inclusive culture that respects diversity. They inspire Muslims to deepen their religious understanding proportionally and avoid fanaticism and intolerance. Following the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who taught balance and avoided excessiveness, moderate da'wah becomes a solution to social anxieties and interfaith tensions. In the complex and interconnected global context, the role of moderate preachers is increasingly vital as guides toward a harmonious and dignified life. They bridge authentic religious teachings and the dynamic challenges of the modern era.

The development of digital technology provides broad opportunities for preachers to preach actively through various online media. Platforms such as social media enable preachers to share religious messages interactively with a broad audience without geographical limitations. Through media like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, they build close relationships with followers through educational content, inspirational quotes, and video-based Islamic studies. Two-way interaction with the audience makes da'wah more inclusive and grounded, as preachers can directly respond to questions and spiritual needs. The messages delivered can be packaged attractively, catering to social media users' visual and concise preferences. Content creativity, consistency in delivery, and courteous approaches make digital da'wah a means of disseminating information and a way to build solid religious communities. Amid Indonesia's social diversity, known for interfaith tolerance, social media-based da'wah also strengthens social ties and instills Islamic moderation values in the digital generation. This is a powerful strategy to maintain social harmony and reinforce an inclusive religious identity.

One prominent moderate preacher who excels in utilizing digital media is Habib Muhammad Luthfi bin Yahya. As a spiritual leader and Rais 'Aam of JATMAN, he is known for his gentle, tolerant, and wise approach. Habib Luthfi employs various digital platforms, including official websites and social media accounts, to spread calming Islamic messages. His lecture videos, dhikr sessions, and advice are consistently uploaded on YouTube and other platforms, reaching Indonesian society and Muslims worldwide. His da'wah covers daily life topics, Sufism, and maintaining unity and nationalism. Many

followers report spiritual improvement after engaging with his online materials. Habib Luthfi also emphasizes love for the homeland, tolerance, and peace in religious practice, values highly needed in pluralistic societies. His presence in the digital space demonstrates that moderate da'wah can be effectively delivered through modern media without diminishing the depth of spiritual messages. Figures like Habib Luthfi illustrate how da'wah based on Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah values can develop in the digital era and remain relevant across generations.

D. CONCLUSION

Da'wah in the digital era has undergone a significant transformation, utilizing technology as a strategic means to spread Islamic teachings to a broad audience, especially the younger generation. Preachers creatively use platforms like YouTube, Instagram, podcasts, and Zoom to deliver Islamic messages interactively, flexibly, and contextually. Da'wah content is no longer limited to conventional lectures but is packaged in animations, classical Islamic text studies, and virtual community discussions. This approach is increasingly practical in reaching digital audiences who tend to be visual and dynamic, while also serving as a tool to counteract the spread of extremist ideologies through peaceful and moderate narratives. In the context of spiritual guidance, da'wah approaches also emphasize the importance of integrating emotions, spirituality, and effective communication. This guidance strengthens inner transformation through the presence of spiritual mentors and is even incorporated into mental health therapies such as TIIP, which combines Islamic values with modern psychotherapy. One effective form of spiritual practice is dzikir therapy, proven to enhance inner peace and deepen the spiritual connection. Figures like Habib Luthfi bin Yahya exemplify moderate da'wah based on digital platforms. With a calming and tolerant style, he disseminates the teachings of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah Islam globally through social media. His da'wah emphasizes love for the homeland, tolerance, and high spiritual values. Thus, digital da'wah strategies meet contemporary needs and play an essential role in shaping a religious, inclusive, and harmonious society amid global challenges.

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