

# The Evolution of Islamic Preaching by the Existence of Smartphones

## *Evolusi Dakwah dengan Keberadaan Smartphone*

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**Abstract** - This study aims to get an overview of the development of Islamic Preaching through smartphones in the digital era. This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenology design. This study examined the phenomenon of the booming of Preaching content on social media since Preaching through social media is currently in demand, as indicated by the emergence of a large number of the preacher, especially in Indonesia. The experience and motive of such phenomenon became the basis of this study's analysis using phenomenological methods and Alfred Schutz's theory. The results demonstrated a change in the Preaching of the preacher. The spirit of delivering Preaching (through writings) is based on two types of motives. First, individuals are eager (to) receive a blessing from Allah and be 'ghirah.' Second, the convenience and facilities available in smartphone technology have triggered the development of social media platforms that eventually support the delivery of Preaching.

**Keywords:** smartphones, social media, Islam, preaching by writing.

**Abstrak** – Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memperoleh gambaran tentang perkembangan dakwah melalui smartphone di era digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan desain fenomenologi. Penelitian ini mengkaji fenomena booming konten dakwah di media sosial, yang mana dakwah melalui media sosial saat ini banyak diminati. Hal ini ditunjukkan dengan munculnya sejumlah besar da'i khususnya di Indonesia. Pengalaman dan motif dari fenomena tersebut menjadi dasar analisis penelitian ini dengan menggunakan metode fenomenologis dan teori Alfred Schutz. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada perubahan dakwah oleh Da'i. Semangat dakwah (melalui tulisan) dilandasi oleh dua jenis motif. Pertama, individu berkeinginan (untuk) menerima berkah dari Allah dan menjadi 'ghirah'. Kedua, kemudahan serta juga fasilitas yang tersedia dalam teknologi smartphone telah memicu berkembangnya platform media sosial yang pada akhirnya mendukung penyampaian dakwah.

**Kata kunci:** telepon pintar, media sosial, Islam, dakwah dengan tulisan.

## INTRODUCTION

The Islamic missionary activism (*Da'wa*) is an act of communicating the truth by referring to the Qur'an and Hadith. Kuiper (2021) wrote the classical concept of *Da'wa* was defined as 'inviting' to Islam or Islamic missions. Communication has started since the existence of humans in the world. It is life's primary need. It is also a means of conveying information, which could be in the form of ideas, suggestions, or ideas among people. In addition, communication could be carried out through media as an intermediary or directly.

Technological developments have enabled long-distance communication via voice. Antonio Meucci first discovered voice communication using the

telephone. The wireless phone was invented later by Martin Cooper. He made the first call and spoke with Joel Engel on April 3, 1973 (Febrian & Mahabarata, 2020).

Advances in the development of telecommunications technology have enabled the further combination of voice, text, and picture messages. It is made possible by the invention of the internet, which allows those messages to be delivered almost instantly (Zamroni, 2009). The desire to send various messages at the same time eventually drove the creation of smartphones. In addition, these devices could be used to search for news or send emails even when a user is on a phone call simultaneously.

The first smartphone was named Simon, designed by IBM in 1992 and exhibited as a concept product that

year at COMDEX, a computer fair in Las Vegas, Nevada (Ardi & Subchan, 2014). Smartphones were commercially launched in 1993. It began to be widely used after the release of the iPhone on the market in 2007. At the time, iPhone was the first to combine multimedia functions, email, and browsing features in one device (Wardani, 2016).

In the current digital age, the convenience and multi-function of smartphones have begun to change people's life. Smartphones introduced various convenient features in fulfilling users' wishes, including the need to search for religious knowledge. *Da'wa*, through social media, especially in Indonesia, is currently experiencing great demand. It was demonstrated by the number of Islamic Preacher who has emerged and been using their social media accounts to preach. Many millennials who use smartphones seek and discover *Da'wa* through their social media. It is an evolution of the Preacher profession from a conventional way, where one devoted considerable time to studying religion. However, today, *Da'wa* can be technically carried out by anybody more straightforwardly. Therefore, the use of smartphones in delivering and receiving *Da'wa* could be seen as very successful progress. Millennials prefer *Da'wa* in short sessions and videos with a duration of less than one minute while successfully delivering Islamic values without causing boredom to the viewers.

A study presented the phenomenon of *Da'wa* by words through social media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, etc.). It used quantitative descriptive methods with a phenomenological approach. It stated that the use of social media in Preaching was due to its wide distribution and widespread use by the general public. Numerous young preachers have been taking advantage of such benefits, triggered by millennials who prefer social media and the extraordinary power of social media to enable exciting content to go viral (Septyaningsti, 2020). Instagram's live feature has been used to broadcast live lectures or recitations, although there is also mention of *Da'wa* by writing through posters or images containing *Da'wa*.

The study examines the evolution of the Preacher profession concerning the convenience provided by smartphones. The research question is, "How does the Preacher profession evolve with the existence of smartphones in the development of *Da'wa* by writing?"

## METHODS

Constructivist research is interpretative research that uses a qualitative descriptive approach with the phenomenological method. Phenomenology as a method and a theory is a form of research based on the meaning that exists in cognition and is related to the whole phenomenon.

In the phenomenological method, the motive was the subjectivity of the smartphone user. In contrast, the meaning built on digital communication devices, "smartphones," was based on users' knowledge of digital devices.

Experience is an adequate basis for analysis in Alfred Schutz's study of social phenomenology. Therefore, an actual interview was conducted with several millennials in an aromatherapy business community regarding the experience of running *Da'wa* using short messages. Data were selected by filtering from the total data obtained, omitting those unrelated to the research paradigm. Finally, the approach was applied to obtain representative data.

Edmund Husserl first pioneered the first philosophy of phenomenology in the 1900s. Husserl stated that phenomenology provides a descriptive and systematic explanation of the awareness of seeking and enabling knowledge (Husserl, 1998). The phenomenological characteristics include:

- a. Phenomenology is a method that claims to be utterly preconceived
- b. Phenomenology analyses data and does not speculate about a hypothetical world
- c. Phenomenology is descriptive, specific, and based on cumulative results
- d. Phenomenology is an adequate empiricist than Locke, Hume, or William James
- e. Phenomenology is specific
- f. Phenomenology is a genuine scientific endeavor.

Husserl's phenomenology philosophy gave Schutz and other social phenomenologists a starting point. Their objectives are the experimental pillars of science. Husserl also stated that consciousness is always present from the beginning as part of the conscious object composition.

Subsequently, Schutz mapped out the five theoretical levels (Sobur, 2019). First, the epic of scientific attitude (epoche of nature attitude), namely past experiences, cannot be a guide for the present. Second, the synthesis of identification, namely the construction of natural and social objects, must be

perfected through endless renewal. Third, all objects of the social world as a framework of ‘kinship and intimacy’ provided by the ‘stock of knowledge possessed’ whose origins in the social world. Fourth, the stock of social construction remains as it was initially. Finally, the general perspectives-reciprocity-thesis concludes that different perspectives, biographies, and motivations direct doers to have non-identical experiences of the world. Nevertheless, they still consider their experiences identical for all practical purposes.

Direct data from the doers were retrieved from preachers’ experiences responding to smartphones’ existence in conveying *Da’wa* messages. As stated by Schutz, the object of social science research is related to the interpretation of reality.

Schutz concluded that understanding the phenomena that occur in individuals or groups could be identified in three models of human action (Hamzah, 2020). First logical consistency (The postulate of logical consistency) is used to make the objective validity of the constructs made by researchers. Second subjective interpretation (The postulate of personal interpretation) is used as a reference for all forms of human action and the meaning of these actions. Third, adequacy (The postulate of adequacy), namely the construction of meaning that individuals or groups raise.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Process of *Da’wa* on Social Media

Digital newspaper Tempo. Co reported that smartphone users in Indonesia are increasing. A digital marketing research institute called e-Marketer predicted that in 2018 the number of active smartphone users in Indonesia would increase by more than one hundred million. It made Indonesia the fourth largest country with active smartphone users worldwide, after China, India, and America (Wahyudi, 2015).

In addition, Katadata.co.id indicated that more than half of the population in Indonesia, or 56.2% (Note: statistical data recorded from the results of the Population Census (Data Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), 2021), SP2020, in September 2020 present a population of 270.20 million people) used smartphones in 2018. A year later, 63.3% of the population used the device. By 2025, at least 89.2% of the population in Indonesia will be using smartphones.

Another data indicated that smartphones changed Indonesians’ lives (Pusparisa, 2020) and brought social

change to citizens. Herefore, the role of technology in people’s lives is inevitable, with various aspects of human life being facilitated, such as social, economic, and political aspects.

Heidegger (Poespowardojo, 1989) defined technology as a form of human existence in the world. It reflected humans’ need to increase their completeness and convenience through the presence of technology. A desire to exploit nature drives technological development. Human attitudes evolve from being determined by qualitative to quantitative values. Several inputs to modify the millennial preachers’ method when they first started using smartphones are presented as follows:

“How was the process of preaching (on social media) through smartphones carried out?”

- a. Informant-1: “I have been using social media to do *Da’wa* for a long time but have not been very active. In 2014, I was only an active user and was preaching using videos or articles.”
- b. Informant-2: “I was told about the ease of using smartphones. Then, I accessed social media to use for *Da’wa*. In addition, it can reach more people and expand the Islamic broadcast.”
- c. Informant-3: “I got attracted by youths using social media such as Instagram or WhatsApp. Most of the harmful contents were spread through those media. As a result, we were trying to counter them through positive content.”
- d. Informant-4: “I started preaching through social media and spreading social media applications that can be accessed easily via smartphones. Then, their propaganda has developed on several other social media platforms, such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, where users are very diverse. The diversity ranges from ordinary citizens, athletes, artists, and politicians. It was hoped that the spread of *Da’wa* would be expanded.”

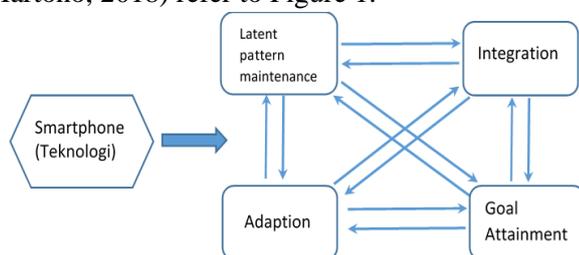
Based on the above inputs, it can be concluded that the change in the method of *Da’wa* by using a smartphone is due to its convenience.

A smartphone is a communication device with various advanced features, referred to as a minicomputer, where people can easily access applications, communication, news, education, etc. In general, some contributors in Harrison’s book (2005), *The Sociology of Modernization and Development*, talked about Modernization and agreed in several fundamental respects:

- a. Societies are adaptive systems that are geared to survival;
- b. They are primarily normative systems;
- c. Innovation and diffusion are crucial in modernization, and
- d. Modern societies are unique, especially in their internal differentiation.

Smartphones have affected society. Nanang Martono mentioned in his book *Sociology of Change* that the study of social change could be classified into four theories. First, the evolution theory argued that social change had a fixed direction passing all society members. The proponents of this theory include Comte, Spencer, and Marx. Second, the cycle theory argued that a transitional stage would return from the original set to experience. The proponents of this theory include Ibn Khaldun. Third, the functional theory used the analogy of society as an organic system (living things). The proponents of this theory include Durkheim, Parsons, Tonnies, and Spencer. Fourth, conflict theory argues that society consists of individuals with unlimited needs and wants, although the ability of everyone to get them is not the same. The proponents of this theory include Marx and Webber (Martono, 2018).

How does social change occur? According to Parsons, every system must be able to interact with its environment. This interaction subsequently becomes an agreement or consensus. Consensus is the key to the stability of a system. The technological developments in Parsons' thinking are described in the AGIL scheme (Martono, 2018) refer to Figure 1.



**Figure 1** Parson's AGIL scheme

When the technology subsystem enters a system, every component in the system (AGIL: adaptation, goal attainment, integration, latent pattern maintenance) must create various adjustments. Technology may affect system goals, integration, maintenance patterns, and adaptation processes. Each of these four functions (Parsons, 1991) could be explained as:

- a. Adaption: The system must adapt to cope with complex external situations and the environment to meet its needs.

- b. Goal Attainment: The system needs to define, attempt, and achieve its objectives.
- c. Integration: The system must be able to regulate and maintain relationships with its components. This system must also be able to manage three functions (AGI).
- d. Latent Pattern Maintenance: The system must be able to maintain and improve the motivation of individuals and cultural patterns.

In Parson's theory, the existence of smartphones, when associated with them, is similar to a subsystem, where various consequences would result. Another subsystem must inevitably adapt to the presence of smartphones. Smartphones as technology are a symbol of progress, where any individuals with access to them would eventually benefit from improvement in any form. Humans are very dependent on technology, and since ancient times technology has been used as a tool. According to Auguste Comte (Martono, 2018), the human reason or ratio that has evolved evolutionarily is the initial capital for humans to deal with various life problems.

According to Wilbert Moore (Goa, 2017), social change is essential. It occurs in the overall social structure, behavior patterns, and social interaction systems, including changes in norms, values, and cultural phenomena.

### Positive and Negative Effects of Smartphones and Social Media

Nowadays, automation technology and cyber technology have merged. Hence the industry has started to welcome the virtual world. It has enabled the public space for human communication to be wide open, along with the changes from wired phones to mobile phones and subsequently to smartphones. The way to communicate is no longer two-way, but from various directions with the existence of communities that we usually refer to as social media. This interaction, regardless of space, time, and distance, would eventually change the perspective, culture, and way of thinking to the ideology of the community in living the wheel of life, which carry positive and negative impacts (Rosana, 2011).

Based on the inputs obtained from the volunteers who responded to the interview, smartphones have several positive and negative impacts. The Positive effects such as: Assisting daily activities in taking care of family members; Enabling more accessible communication; Expanding and strengthening

friendships, including with those who are in distant places; Acting as a medium of entertainment; Enabling easier information search; Enabling easier participation in preaching and following religious studies; and Helping learning process and information gathering. On the contrary, it also has negative impacts, such as: Creating a lack of social interaction in real life; Creating a lack of empathy for the environment; Encouraging addiction or dependence; Creating distance between those who are physically close; Creating habits of games; Creating division and bullying; Enabling easy access to immoral sites (porn sites, gambling sites, etc.)

According to Ferdinand Tonnies (Martono, 2018), the existence of technology has created an enormous change and influence in society. It has also encouraged individual lifestyles. This internet-based technology has also given birth to a generation raised in internet culture, called millennials or digital natives, whose activities can be observed from various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Path, WhatsApp, and Instagram.

Digital natives use these social media platforms to communicate in the current digital era. Based on the research conducted by DataReportal, a platform for social media management and marketing agencies, social media users were predominantly 18-34 years old (Figure 2).

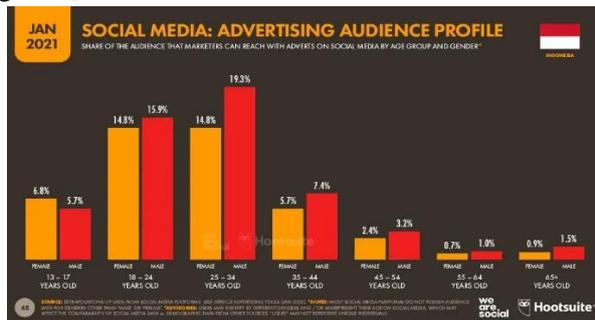


Figure 2 Social Media Users Profile (Ages), (Kemp et al., 2021)

Several new digital phenomena are presented as follows (Sakti, 2020):

a. Selfie (selfie): an activity supported by the availability of a camera on a smartphone. Selfies are easily shared and published through smartphones. This activity also manifests self-existence, increasing engagement to add friends and followers. Selfies attempt to reconstruct social identity by optimizing positive characters and minimizing negative feelings to maintain self-esteem.

- b. Cyberwar is a fanatic phenomenon towards a supported party by sharing support/opinions on social media, which tends to create virtual arguments. The group’s paradigm typically influences a supporter of a particular group.
- c. They are sharing culture, an activity where information is shared on social media, typically via “spread,” “save,” or “share to others” feature. This “sharing culture phenomenon” unfortunately caused the dissemination of hoaxes since users are occasionally reluctant to read and seek the truth before sharing fully.

### The Purposes of Preaching

The word *Da’wa*/preaching in Islam generally means “inviting people towards Allah and His instructions.” This practice is commonly considered limited to religious matters only, such as comprehending the concept of ‘Oneness of God’, performing prayers five times a day, fasting, believing in prophets and the day of judgment, etc. There are two types of *Da’wa*: (1) proselytizing, where preachers attempt to convey the message of religious convictions to non-Muslims through convincing dialogues. (2) reminding the present Muslim Ummah of their duties and responsibilities according to the commands of the Quran and the Prophet’s (PBUH) Sunnah. In either case, a Preacher (preacher) must possess sincerity, complete knowledge, wisdom, patience, consistency, modesty, empathy, and, above all, be a great devotee of the advocated teachings.

The following are interview results conducted in this study which indicate a trend or goal of millennial preachers in addressing the phenomenon:

“What is the purpose of preaching on social media through smartphones?”

- a. Informant 1: Seeking the pleasure of Allah. Through smartphones on social media, *Da’wa* can be done anywhere, and it was hoped to receive the reward by the *Da’wa* delivered.
- b. Informant 2: Earning rewards and increasing the number of followers rankings, especially attracting sympathy from youths.
- c. Informant 3: Being passionate about the Islamic mission. If what was conveyed became *Da’wa* which inspired other people to become better, then Alhamdulillah.
- d. Informant 4: Improving the understanding of Islam. Many young people who begin learning Islam feel they are in the best version by *tahzir*

(warning people from deviations of Islamic thought or preachers clerics) who have been studying Islam for decades.

The above inputs indicate a desire to receive a blessing or reward from Allah and *ghirah* (an expression of jealousy because Allah SWT, essentially the Muslim responds when it gets unfair treatment). As mentioned in Qur'an (Al-Ashr, 103: 2-3), "Indeed, mankind is in the loss. Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience", Allah promises rewards for those who admonish one another to do good deeds. This verse is a famous reference in Preaching, and it is always encouraged to remind each other of any good act. Nevertheless, some merely wished to increase followers by preaching through social media accounts.

DataReportal research in January 2021 indicated that the most downloaded and accessed social media applications are: Youtube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook (Figure 3).

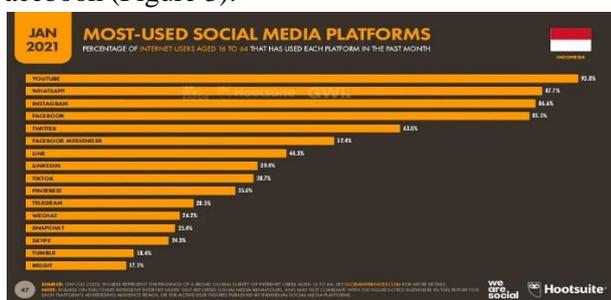


Figure 3 The Most-Used Social Media Media Platforms Data (Kemp et al., 2021)

Preachers are also used social media applications, whether they are experts in Islamic science or those who do not have a strong basis in Islamic education. They wish to do *Da'wa* to receive Allah's blessing and improve Islamic understanding. Getting more followers is the least of the goals. The features and convenience of smartphones and social media are also used to evaluate the phenomenon of blasphemy, attack, and hostility towards each other. At first, social media was created to bring people closer and enhance friendship. Today, it has become a medium to spread the destruction of certain groups or even individuals who oppose the newsmaker or the message sender. In the worst situation, the phenomena of blasphemy, attacks, and hoaxes have penetrated matters related to religion. There are several factors behind the emergence of fake news or hoaxes against religion, one of which is used by the enemies of Islam to fight the Muslims. A person who lies or prefers to spread hoaxes

is someone who always relays everything they hear without analyzing and verifying before posting and sending (Septianingsih, 2020).

### What Form of *Da'wa* content and Who Create it?

Young Muslims who conduct businesses through social media also believe that motivating each other through social media posts is a way of Preaching. Regarding the meaning of *hijrah*. The term initially refers to the life of the Prophet Muhammad when he moved from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE to avoid the persecution of himself and his closest followers by the Meccans. In this age, *hijrah* is also used as a term meaning follower of Islamist movement or in a struggle to transform and become a better person in practicing Islam for the creators of *Da'wa* content. It is not only intended for women but also men. *Da'wa* introduces *hijrah*, which refers to the way to achieve the goal of becoming a better Muslim (Nisa, 2018). In addition to the diverse media types, Indonesia nowadays also has male or female preachers with no experience in pesantren (Islamic boarding school) or Islamic Traditions of Studies. Muslim youths are involved in profitable and creative activities while also getting alternative spaces for Indonesian Muslim women to build their identity as virtuous Muslims.

In *Da'wa*, various forms of delivery are carried out by millennial preachers, both in writing and video. It is also conveyed in the interview as follows:

“What form of *Da'wa* content is uploaded, and is it self-made or reposted from others?”

- Informant-1: “Most of the time, I make my posts, especially *Da'wa*, in writing, and I share them through WhatsApp and Instagram. As for the videos for Instagram and Youtube, I first recorded the sound using my cellphone, and then the video would be made by the other youths.”
- Informant-2: “The content is in the form of writing and video. I created the writings myself, while the video is teamwork to be displayed on Youtube. I mostly did the writings because they are faster to do and can be directly shared on WhatsApp and Instagram.”
- Informant-3: “I made most of them myself and usually took pictures of others without fully revealing ourselves. By adding encouraging words, it could be motivating content. Some re-posts or shared writings and videos from other accounts invite doing positive things and promoting unity.

Videos are not yet uploaded because they require tools and a team.”

- d. Informant-4: “Most content comes from well-known Ustadhs (Muslim scholars). The content uploaded on WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook is mainly in the form of posters with writings. If it is a video, it is done selectively. That is only videos to promote unity.”

Based on Informants’ inputs, it can be concluded that creativity in making *Da’wa* content in a short time published through texts was presumed to significantly influence people who join or follow preacher’s social media accounts. It is because people must understand religion and the purpose of life according to the Qur’an and Sunnah of the Prophet.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Social media is a medium that can foster social interaction between people through several social networks by always maintaining the rules and norms of politeness. The new medium currently popular is smartphones.

Smartphones’ functions have accelerated into multimedia communication tools with numerous features. They can facilitate activities of various professions, enabling people to adapt and achieve their goals quickly. The development of smartphones is also adapted to the wishes of society as an environment. It is conducted to maintain and improve individual and cultural motivational patterns. Alfred Schutz’s view of motives sees there are two types of motives, namely the motive “to” (to) and the motive “of” (because of).

The results of this study indicate that there is an evolution in the *Da’wa* of Preacher. The spirit of delivering *Da’wa* (through writings) arises from young people (or in general as a society) who do not yet have Islamic solid education principles and desire to receive Allah’s blessings. It is supported by the convenience and features available in smartphones that trigger the development of social media platforms. Nowadays, it is easy to discover various writings in the form of *Da’wa* messages to live a life according to the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. However, the development of *Da’wa Bil Qalam* with the information technology advancement still needs to be explored from various points of view, including the occurrence of Islamic words such as *Fii Amanillah*, *Jazakallahu*, *Barakallahu Fii Umrik*, etc. On the other hand, the inner atmosphere of each individual who is the object

of *Da’wa Bil Qalam* and many more can be studied further.

Any individual can carry out *Da’wa*. The simpler the content was created, the more interesting it will be. Current preachers suggest creating more creative content to enable the *Da’wa* to reach a wider audience, including the types of languages used. Despite the negative impacts smartphones may carry, the general public should better understand how to use them to benefit from the device optimally.

This study can also be used in another approach to conducting further research. For example, several elements could still be further examined, such as behaviorism, uses-effect, agenda-setting, and others.

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