
Provocative Da'wah and Qur'anic Ethics: A Critical Study of Surah An-Nahl 125

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Abstract

This study criticizes the phenomenon of provocative da'wah on social media through the perspective of Qur'anic ethics in Surah An-Nahl verse 125. With the qualitative method of content analysis and thematic hermeneutics, the results of the study show that: (1) Provocative da'wah theologically deviates from the principles of Qur'anic da'wah and ethically violates Islamic moral values such as al-ḥilm (politeness) and ar-raḥmah (compassion); (2) The three pillars in Surah An-Nahl verse 125 offer a comprehensive communication ethics framework for digital da'wah, which is integrated with digital literacy and moral responsibility; (3) The implementation of this framework has academic implications for the development of thematic interpretation studies and digital communication science, as well as practical implications in the form of operational guidelines for da'wah to create a calming, unifying, and dignified digital da'wah ecosystem (rahmatan lil 'alamin).

Keywords: Ethics of Digital Da'wah, Surah An-Nahl Verse 125, Criticism of the Provocative Da'wah Phenomenon

Provocative Preaching and the Ethics of the Qur'an: Critical Study of Surah An-Nahl 125

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkritisi fenomena dakwah provokatif di media sosial melalui perspektif etika Qur'ani dalam Surah An-Nahl ayat 125. Dengan metode kualitatif analisis konten dan hermeneutika tematik, Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: (1) Dakwah provokatif secara teologis menyimpang dari prinsip dakwah Qur'ani dan secara etis melanggar nilai-nilai akhlak Islam seperti al-ḥilm (kesantunan) dan ar-raḥmah (kasih sayang); (2) Tiga pilar dalam Surah An-Nahl ayat 125 menawarkan kerangka etika komunikasi yang komprehensif untuk dakwah digital, yang terintegrasi dengan literasi digital dan tanggung jawab moral; (3) Implementasi kerangka ini memiliki implikasi akademis bagi pengembangan kajian tafsir tematik dan ilmu komunikasi digital, serta implikasi praktis berupa pedoman operasional bagi para dai untuk menciptakan ekosistem dakwah digital yang menyejukkan, mempersatukan, dan bermartabat (rahmatan lil 'alamin).

Keywords: Etika Dakwah Digital, Surah An-Nahl Ayat 125, Kritik terhadap Fenomena Dakwah yang Provokatif

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A. Introduction

The development of social media has created a new space for Islamic preaching in the digital era. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok are widely used to convey religious messages with wide and rapid reach.¹ However, behind this enormous opportunity, there has also emerged the phenomenon of provocative preaching, which is often emotional, confrontational, and even divisive in society. This phenomenon has the potential to create misperceptions about Islamic teachings, which should be filled with wisdom, gentleness, and a spirit of unity.

Surah An-Nahl verse 125 provides an ideal methodological framework for da'wah by emphasizing three main approaches: *bil-hikmah* (with wisdom), *al-mau'izhah al-hasanah* (good advice), and *al-jidāl bi al-latī hiya aḥsan* (dialogue in the best way)² This verse emphasizes that da'wah should not be conducted in provocative ways that cause division, but rather should prioritize ethics, rationality, and persuasiveness. Thus, the Qur'anic values in this verse are relevant to reexamine in the context of digital da'wah, which is often misused for certain interests.

The dialectic between the normative message of the Quran and the reality of communication in cyberspace opens up space for both academic and practical reflection, so that da'wah can be reoriented as a means of moral enlightenment and moral development, rather than as a provocation that causes division. This study seeks to highlight the relevance of Surah An-Nahl verse 125 in responding to the challenge of provocative da'wah on social media, while also offering a Qur'anic perspective as an ethical guideline for da'is, academics, and the wider community in utilizing digital space politely and dignifiedly.

¹ Rosa Lestari et al., "THE CRISIS OF KNOWLEDGE AUTHORITY IN QURANIC INTERPRETATION: REFLECTIONS ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE ON MISINFORMATION IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA," *Al-Mubin: Islamic Scientific Journal* 8, no. 1 (2025): 107-18, <https://doi.org/10.51192/almubin.v8i1.1694>.

² Didik Buhariyanto, "Implikas Pedagogis Al-Qur'an Surah An-Nahl Ayat 125 Tentang Metode Hikmah Mauizhah Hasanah dan Mujadalah (Analisis Pendidikan Islam)" (diploma, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2014), <https://digilib.uinsgd.ac.id/6277/>.

Surah An-Nahl, verse 125, provides a fundamental foundation for Islamic da'wah ethics, emphasizing the importance of integrating the method of message delivery with noble morals. This concept demonstrates that da'wah is not merely conveying a message verbally, but also a communication practice grounded in ethics, social sensitivity, and Islamic morals. Therefore, this verse is relevant as a universal guide for da'wah (preachers) in navigating the diverse dynamics of a digital society.

The bil-hikmah method requires preachers to prioritize knowledge, rational argumentation, and wisdom so that the message of da'wah can be received critically and meaningfully. Al-mau'izhah al-hasanah emphasizes gentleness, exemplary behavior, and inspiring messages as a reflection of noble morals that can touch the hearts of the audience. Meanwhile, al-jidāl bi al-latī hiya aḥsan teaches an ethics of dialogue that upholds politeness, respects differences, and avoids confrontational rhetoric. These three methods form a complete ethical framework for Qur'anic da'wah, making Islamic da'wah acceptable across all levels of society with an approach that is soothing and fosters morals.

The relevance of Surah An-Nahl verse 125 is increasingly felt in the current context. The abundance of information, hoaxes, and societal polarization require wise, inspiring, and dialogical methods of da'wah. This Qur'anic message encourages da'wah (preachers) not only to master religious content but also to possess digital literacy, social sensitivity, and effective communication skills. By applying the principles of wisdom, goodness and integrity, and mutual respect, digital da'wah can be an instrument for building understanding, reducing conflict, and strengthening brotherhood in a pluralistic society.

Research has highlighted the relevance of Surah An-Nahl verse 125 to contemporary da'wah practices. Research by Erviana Iradah Ulya (2023) highlights the importance of the ma'na cum maghza approach in understanding the verse in the context of Cyberdakwah, with a focus on gentleness and wisdom as a response to digital da'wah content that tends to be provocative and fanatical.³ Neng Rina

³ Erviana Iradah Ulya, "Relevansi Cyberdakwah Dalam Penafsiran Q.S. An-Nahl 125 Perspektif Ma'na Cum Maghza" (masters, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2023), <http://digilib.uinsa.ac.id/66886/>.

Wahyuni (2023) examines the ethics of amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar on social media based on the same verse, with an emphasis on the importance of polite and non-judgmental da'wah communication.⁴ Pareza (2023) explores the method of da'wah in Surah An-Nahl verse 125 and its relevance to today's da'wah.⁵, although they have not explicitly criticized the provocative style of preaching. These three studies make important contributions to understanding the methodology of Qur'anic preaching, but they have not comprehensively linked the verse to a critique of the phenomenon of provocative preaching in the digital space and its impact on the formation of public morality.

This article offers novelty by integrating the ethical approach of Surah An-Nahl verse 125 as a framework for criticism of the provocative style of digital da'wah, while emphasizing the urgency of morals as a dimension that is often neglected in online da'wah practices. This article not only expands the scope of thematic interpretation of the verse, but also provides a new contribution to the discourse on the ethics of Islamic communication in the digital era.

The main problem studied in this research starts from the question of how Surah An-Nahl verse 125 provides the ethical basis for digital da'wah that is in line with the principles of hikmah, mau'izhah hasanah, and jidāl bi al-latī hiya aḥsan, and how the relevance of criticism of the phenomenon of provocative da'wah on social media can contribute to the formation of morals, both for da'is and digital society. This problem formulation emphasizes the need for an in-depth study of the dialectic of the Qur'anic text with the context of contemporary da'wah, so that a framework for digital da'wah ethics can be found that is both Qur'anic and applicable in responding to the challenges of provocation, hate speech, and polarization that are rife in the virtual public space.

⁴Neng Rina Wahyuni, *Etika Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar di Media Sosial Perspektif Surat An-Nahl 125*, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, 2023.

⁵ Pareza Pareza dkk., *Metode Dakwah Dalam Surah An-Nahl Ayat 125 dan Relevansinya Terhadap Dakwah Masa Sekarang*, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Curup, 2023.

B. Theoretical review

This research is based on the theory of Islamic communication ethics rooted in Qur'anic values, particularly Surah An-Nahl verse 125. This verse establishes three fundamental principles of da'wah: al-hikmah (epistemic and contextual wisdom), al-mau'izhah al-hasanah (transformative and soothing advice), and al-mujādalah bi al-latī hiya aḥsan (polite and argumentative dialogue). This theoretical framework serves as a critical analytical tool to examine the phenomenon of provocative da'wah on social media that often ignores these ethical principles.

The theory of Islamic communication ethics is understood as a system of norms that integrates transcendental (divine) and humanistic-social dimensions. Core values such as al-hilm (courtesy), ar-raḥmah (compassion), and al-'adl (justice) serve as the operational foundation for these three pillars of da'wah.⁶ This approach emphasizes that religious communication is not only aimed at conveying the truth, but must also consider the social and psychological impacts on the recipients of the message. Methodologically, this study adopts a contextual thematic (maudū'i) interpretation approach in interpreting Surah An-Nahl verse 125. This approach allows for the elaboration of the meaning of the three pillars of da'wah in the context of new media ecology characterized by the characteristics of virality, algorithms, and participatory culture. Contextual interpretation is carried out by considering the socio-digital realities of contemporary society.

The Islamic communication theology proposed by classical thinkers such as al-Ghazali and contemporary thinkers such as Khaled M. Abou El Fadl serves as an analytical framework for understanding the reconstruction of religious authority in the digital space. This theory analyzes how religious authority is no longer monopolized by traditional institutions but is also shaped through participatory and sometimes anarchic digital interactions.⁷

⁶ Muhammad Hatta dkk., "Principles of Islamic Communication and Their Relevance in Character Formation of Students: A Study of Surah An-Nahl 125 Tafsir At-Thabari's Perspective," *Electronic Journal of Education, Social Economics and Technology* 6, no. 1 (2025): 8–14, <https://doi.org/10.33122/ejeset.v6i1.376>; "Peraturan-BKN-Nomor-3-Tahun-2023-tentang-AK-Kenaikan-Pagkat-Jenjang-JF.pdf," t.t., Accessed 16 January 2024, <https://www.bkn.go.id/unggah/2023/07/Peraturan-BKN-Nomor-3-Tahun-2023-tentang-AK-Kenaikan-Pagkat-Jenjang-JF.pdf>.

⁷ Eva Kepplinger, "Khaled Abou El Fadl's Understanding of Sharia in Theory and in Practice. A Critical Analysis," *Hikma* 12, no. 2 (2021): 145–57, <https://doi.org/10.13109/hikm.2021.12.2.145>.

This research examines digital media literacy theory, which emphasizes critical competency in producing and consuming digital content. This theory is relevant to analyzing how digital preachers negotiate the algorithmic logic of social media, which often prioritizes provocative content. The digital ethics framework developed by Ess and Johannesen provides a perspective on moral responsibility in communicating in the digital space.

The theoretical framework is used to criticize provocative preaching practices that ignore the principles of al-hikmah and al-mau'izhah al-hasanah.⁸ This model of da'wah often emphasizes harsh rhetoric, dichotomy, and hate speech, which contradict Islamic communication ethics. This theory analyzes how these practices not only violate religious norms but also exacerbate social polarization.

This study connects the theory of Islamic communication ethics with the concept of moral formation in al-Ghazali's Islamic educational philosophy. This theory highlights how ethical digital da'wah practices can contribute to the formation of noble morals (akhlāq al-karīmah), while provocative da'wah has the potential to undermine the moral foundations of society.

This research incorporates a critical perspective on the role of social media algorithms in shaping the digital da'wah ecosystem. Algorithmic bias and attention economy theories are used to analyze how digital platforms tend to promote provocative content that generates high engagement, often at the expense of ethical values.

The theoretical framework of this research integrates three scientific fields: Qur'anic studies and interpretation, Islamic communication studies, and digital media studies. This interdisciplinary approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon of digital da'wah from normative, theological, and sociotechnological perspectives.

This theory not only serves as a critical analytical tool but also offers an epistemological construct for building an ethical digital da'wah paradigm. The resulting digital Islamic ethics framework is expected to serve as an operational guideline for da'is in producing religious content that is both relevant to Qur'anic values and adaptable to digital realities.

⁸ Pareza dkk., *Metode Dakwah Dalam Surah An-Nahl Ayat 125 dan Relevansinya Terhadap Dakwah Masa Sekarang*.

C. Research methods

1. Research Approaches and Types

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical library research approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is appropriate for examining socio-theological phenomena such as provocative preaching in depth and holistically, with a focus on the meaning, interpretation, and contextualization of normative values in the digital space.⁹ Through this approach, the research attempts to construct ethical critique based on Qur'anic principles and reconstruct an applicable ethical framework for digital da'wah.

2. Data Sources and Data Collection Techniques

Research data was obtained from two types of data sources. First, primary data sources (primary sources) consisting of the main text of Surah An-Nahl verse 125 along with classic and contemporary tafsir books such as Tafsir al-Tabari, Tafsir al-Qurtubi, Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Fi Zilal al-Qur'an (Sayyid Qutb), and Tafsir al-Misbah (Quraish Shihab). Second, secondary data sources (secondary sources) which include academic journals, books, articles, and relevant social media content that discuss digital da'wah, media algorithms, and Islamic communication ethics. Data collection techniques are carried out through documentation by recording, summarizing and grouping data according to the research focus.

3. Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using content analysis and thematic hermeneutic analysis techniques. Content analysis was used to analyze the phenomenon of provocative da'wah on social media by identifying communication patterns, narratives, and their impacts. Meanwhile, thematic hermeneutic analysis was applied to interpret Surah An-Nahl verse 125 contextually, through three stages: (1) explanation (explaining the meaning of the text based on classical interpretations), (2) interpretation (contextualizing the meaning of the text with the reality of digital da'wah), and (3) application (formulating ethical and practical implications for

⁹ "Creswell, J.W. and Poth, C.N. (2018) Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing among Five Approaches. 4th Edition, SAGE Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks. - References - Scientific Research Publishing," Accessed 13 September 2024, <https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=2155979>.

digital da'wah) (Ricoeur, 1981). This analysis was aimed at answering the problem formulation and confirming or developing existing theoretical propositions.

4. Unit of Analysis and Research Focus

The unit of analysis of this research is the message, values, and methods of da'wah in Surah An-Nahl verse 125 and its manifestation in digital da'wah practices. The focus of the research includes: (1) criticism of the phenomenon of provocative da'wah based on the principles of al-hikmah, al-mau'izhah al-hasanah, and al-mujādalāh bi al-latī hiya aḥsan, (2) the relevance of the values of the verse as the basis for digital da'wah ethics, and (3) the theoretical and practical implications of the integration of Qur'anic ethics with digital literacy.

5. Data Validity and Research Ethics

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, comparing data from various tafsir books, academic literature, and observations of digital da'wah content. Furthermore, this research adheres to academic ethics by clearly citing sources and avoiding plagiarism. The researchers also maintained objectivity by minimizing bias in text interpretation and phenomenon analysis.

D. Results and discussion

1. The meaning of Surah An-Nahl verse 125: classical and contemporary interpretations of wisdom, mau'izhah hasanah, mujjadi.

Surah An-Nahl verse 125 is one of the verses that is the main basis for the theory of Islamic da'wah. This verse instructs Muslims to call people to the path of Allah with three main methods: bi al-hikmah (with wisdom), al-mau'izhah al-hasanah (good advice), and al-mujādalāh bi al-latī hiya aḥsan (dialogue in the best way). In general, this verse emphasizes that da'wah should not be carried out with force or violence, but rather with a polite ethical, persuasive and argumentative approach. Thus, this verse functions as a universal guideline in building humanist preaching communication.

Classical commentators such as al-Tabari, al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Kathir emphasized that wisdom means using strong arguments and profound knowledge in conveying da'wah. Good advice is defined as advice that touches the heart, delivered with gentleness, and does not contain hurtful criticism. Meanwhile, good

manners are defined as intellectual debate or dialogue conducted with etiquette, aimed at discovering the truth, not at demeaning the interlocutor. Classical interpretations emphasize that these three methods are complementary and must be chosen according to the conditions of the mad'u (object of da'wah).¹⁰

Contemporary commentators such as Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad Abduh, and Yusuf al-Qardhawi relate this verse to the challenges of modernity. Wisdom is understood not only as rationality, but also as the ability to read the social, cultural, and psychological context of the audience. Good instruction is interpreted as conveying moral and spiritual messages relevant to the daily lives of modern society. Meanwhile, mujādalāh is seen as the need for interreligious, intercultural, and interideological dialogue in an era of globalization rife with differences. This contemporary interpretation broadens the meaning of the verse to make it more applicable in the context of plurality.¹¹

The relevance of this verse is also evident in the practice of digital da'wah. Wisdom in the context of social media can be interpreted as the intelligence in choosing the right words, narrative, and medium so that the da'wah message is conveyed without causing resistance. Mau'izhah hasanah can be realized through inspirational, educational, and soothing content that touches the hearts of digital media users. Meanwhile, mujādalāh must be implemented in the form of ethical online discussions, avoiding hate speech, and prioritizing problem solving over provocation. Thus, the interpretation of this verse remains relevant to criticize the phenomenon of provocative da'wah that is rampant in the digital space.

Overall, Surah An-Nahl verse 125 affirms the ethical, rational, and dialogical paradigm of Quranic da'wah. Both classical and contemporary interpretations emphasize the importance of wisdom, good advice, and polite dialogue, although the contexts of their applications differ. Classical interpretations emphasize textual and normative aspects, while contemporary interpretations emphasize the modern social context and global challenges. The dialectic between the two can enrich the

¹⁰ "الأراء النحوية لابن مضاء القرطب" Accessed 13 September 2024, https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/landing/article.kci?arti_id=ART002598300.

¹¹ "Sayyid Qutb's Concept of Da'wah in His Fi Zilal al Quran | Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal for Homiletic Studies," accessed September 13, 2024, <https://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/idajhs/article/view/9660>.

understanding and implementation of da'wah, so that Islamic da'wah remains able to respond to the dynamics of the times without losing its Quranic roots and fundamental ethics.

2. The Phenomenon of Provocative Preaching on Social Media

Provocative preaching on social media has become an increasingly prominent phenomenon in recent years. This contrasts with conventional preaching, which emphasizes a wise, gentle, and educational approach (*al-hikmah wa al-mau'izhah al-hasanah*).¹² This model of preaching prioritizes a harsh, confrontational, and emotionally charged communication style. Its content is designed not merely to convey a religious message, but to evoke a spontaneous and powerful reaction from its audience. This phenomenon utilizes digital platforms like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter as its platform, reaching a vast and diverse audience quickly and efficiently.

The case of the arrest of Ustadz Sugi Nur Raharja (popularly known as Gus Nur) by the Criminal Investigation Unit of the Indonesian National Police in October 2020 is a significant empirical example of the implementation of digital law against provocative preaching practices in Indonesia.¹³ The preacher, who actively disseminates content through the YouTube platform, was arrested on suspicion of spreading hate speech and provocative content, which is considered a violation of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE).¹⁴ This case reinforces research findings that social media algorithms often encourage emotionally charged and confrontational content, as demonstrated by Gus Nur's communication style, which frequently utilizes harsh rhetoric and absolutist and inflammatory diction.

The content in question specifically contains a narrative that sharply criticizes certain religious organizations, in which Gus Nur calls Islamic organizations "sycophants" and "traitors to the people." Academic analysis of the

¹² Lia Hutasoit, "Gus Nur Dijerat UU ITE, Pengacara: Itu Pasal Karet!," IDN Times, 27 Oktober 2020, <https://www.idntimes.com/news/indonesia/gus-nur-dijerat-uu-ite-pengacara-itu-pasal-karet-00-sbfjr-9sp3lg>.

¹³ 5 Fakta Gus Nur Tersangka Ujaran Kebencian Diduga Hina NU," Accessed 13 September 2024, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5227416/5-fakta-gus-nur-tersangka-ujaran-kebencian-diduga-hina-nu>.

¹⁴ Hutasoit, "Gus Nur Dijerat UU ITE, Pengacara."

content reveals the characteristics of provocative preaching that fosters an "us versus them" dichotomy, a communication strategy that has the potential to trigger social polarization and erode Islamic values that are rahmatan lil 'alamin. Furthermore, this kind of narrative not only contradicts the principles of al-hikmah and al-mau'izhah al-hasanah in preaching, but also has the potential to damage social cohesion and the image of Islam as a religion that upholds ethical communication.

Legally, Gus Nur was charged with Article 28 Paragraph (2) of the ITE Law, which prohibits the dissemination of information intended to incite hatred or hostility between individuals and/or certain community groups. The use of this article in the context of digital preaching emphasizes the legal responsibility of preachers in producing and disseminating religious content, while also reflecting the state's efforts to maintain public order and social harmony in the digital space. This case also highlights the urgency of digital literacy and Islamic communication ethics for preachers, so that preaching activities not only fulfill the aspect of algorithmic virality, but also remain within the corridor of law and social norms.

The main characteristic of provocative preaching lies in its specific rhetorical style. This style places a strong emphasis on harsh rhetoric, often accompanied by a high-pitched voice, aggressive body language, and absolute and cornering diction.¹⁵ The main element is the use of hate speech that targets specific groups, whether based on beliefs, ethnicity, or political views. This tactic is then reinforced by efforts to create polarization in society, namely establishing a dichotomy of "us versus them" or "absolute right versus absolute wrong." Thus, the audience is not encouraged to think critically, but rather directed to choose sides and feel they are the most righteous.

This phenomenon wouldn't be as widespread as it is today without the role of social media algorithms, the driving force behind it. These platforms' algorithms

¹⁵ Mariana Silva Ninitas, "'Troca de galhardetes'. Para o estudo da violência verbal na polémica sobre o Acordo ortográfico em Portugal / 'Troca de Galhardetes'. For the study of verbal violence in polemical discourses concerning the orthographic agreement in Portugal," *REVISTA DE ESTUDOS DA LINGUAGEM* 28, no. 4 (2020): 1873, <https://doi.org/10.17851/2237-2083.28.4.1873-1912>.

are designed to prioritize content that generates high engagement, such as likes, shares, comments, and long watch times. Provocative content with strong emotional content—especially anger, fear, and hatred—is naturally more likely to trigger such engagement than moderate, in-depth content. As a result, the algorithms indirectly "reward" this provocative content with wider reach, creating an echo chamber where users are constantly exposed to similar views that reinforce their beliefs, ultimately making such content more likely to go viral.

The impact of this rampant provocative preaching is extremely detrimental to national life. The most obvious is the emergence of social disintegration, where bonds of brotherhood among citizens are eroded by mutual suspicion and hostility instilled through hate speech.¹⁶ At a more dangerous level, constant exposure to divisive and hateful narratives can be a gateway to radicalized thinking. Exposed individuals can become increasingly intolerant and ultimately justify violent acts against groups perceived as different or enemies.

The most regrettable impact is the distortion of the true image of Islam. Islam is presented as a religion of rahmatan lil 'alamin—a blessing for the entire universe, which teaches compassion, peace, justice, and respect for differences. However, provocative preaching actually portrays Islam as fierce, exclusive, and full of anger. This distorted image not only poisons the understanding of Muslims themselves but also creates a false perception of Islam in the eyes of non-Muslims. Therefore, encouraging and appreciating preaching content that spreads peace, wisdom, and unity is imperative to counter provocative narratives and restore the true essence of Islam.

3. The Ethics of Digital Da'wah from the Perspective of Surah An-Nahl 125

Surah An-Nahl verse 125 provides eternal guidance on the ethics of preaching which is very relevant in the digital era. Allah SWT says, "Call (humans) to the path of your Lord with wisdom, good lessons, and debate them in the best way¹⁷." This verse serves as an unshakable ethical foundation for every preacher

¹⁶ Muhammad Aulia Ash-Shidiq dan Ahmad R Pratama, "Ujaran Kebencian Di Kalangan Pengguna Media Sosial Di Indonesia: Agama Dan Pandangan Politik," *Automata* 2, no. 1 (2021).

¹⁷ "Tafsir Surat an-nahl Ayat 125 - Arab, Latin, Terjemahan Indonesia," Narasi Tv, Accessed 10 September 2024, <https://narasi.tv/religi/quran-digital/an-nahl/125>.

active in the digital space. The three pillars in the verse—*hikmah*, *mau'izhah hasanah*, and *mujādalāh bi al-latī hiya aḥsan*—offer the right solution to overcome the phenomenon of provocative preaching. By adhering to these principles, digital preaching becomes not only an activity of conveying messages, but also a civilizational practice that humanizes and unites.

The first pillar, Wisdom, demands intelligence and wisdom in designing a digital da'wah strategy. This means a preacher must be discerning in choosing a narrative that aligns with the social and psychological context of his audience, rather than simply appealing to emotions. Wisdom is also reflected in the selection of appropriate media, such as using informative graphic videos for Generation Z or in-depth podcasts for adults. Furthermore, content distribution strategies must be wise, understanding how algorithms work to spread goodness, not provocation. Wisdom is about achieving da'wah goals in the most effective and targeted manner without sacrificing ethical values.

The second pillar, *Mau'izhah Hasanah* (good lessons), directs digital preachers to focus on producing inspiring, educational, and soothing content. Unlike divisive content, *mau'izhah hasanah* is manifested in the form of content that inspires the spirit of doing good, videos that clearly educate about everyday Islamic jurisprudence, or quotes of wisdom that soothe the heart. This type of content not only broadens religious insight but also touches the heart and moves the audience to become better individuals. In a digital environment often filled with chaos, the presence of "hasanah" (good) content is like an oasis that provides coolness and enlightenment.¹⁸

The third pillar, *Mujādalāh bi al-latī hiya aḥsan* (debate in the best manner), is the primary guideline for interacting and discussing in the digital space. This principle teaches us to always maintain ethical dialogue, especially when facing differences of opinion or criticism. Rather than responding to insults with insults or provocation with provocation, a preacher is required to respond with logical, polite arguments and valid facts. This includes reading the components humbly, respecting

¹⁸ Rohman al-Manduri, "Analisis Metode Dakwah (Qs. An-Nahl [16]125) Dalam Perspektif Filsafat Manajemen Dakwah," *Tadbir: Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah FDIK IAIN Padangsidimpuan* 6, no. 2 (2024): 207–28, <https://doi.org/10.24952/tadbir.v6i2.13742>.

differences in schools of thought or opinion, and avoiding all forms of accusation (tabdi') and accusation of disbelief (takfiri). "Ahsân" dialogue will elevate the authority of the preaching and demonstrate religious maturity.¹⁹

All the principles in Surah An-Nahl verse 125 are essentially aimed at strengthening morals, both for preachers and society. For a preacher, the good application of wisdom, mau'izhah hasanah, and mujādalāh is a reflection of his noble morals, such as politeness (adab), patience (shabr), and a sense of responsibility (amanah).²⁰ Simultaneously, da'wah content generated from these principles will guide the morals of digital communities to be more tolerant, empathetic toward differences, and have a strong sense of social solidarity. Thus, digital da'wah not only conveys religious messages but also actively shapes a civilized and noble online ecosystem, reflecting Islam as a blessing for all creation.

E. Critical Analysis and Implications

1. Theological and Ethical Criticism: Deviations from the Principles of Qur'anic Da'wah

The phenomenon of provocative preaching on social media has become a significant object of critical study, not only from a sociological perspective but also from an Islamic normative-theological perspective. This communication style, which prioritizes harsh rhetoric, dichotomy, and hate speech, while often achieving high engagement, raises fundamental questions about its suitability to the essence and purpose of Islamic preaching itself. This practice fundamentally contradicts Quranic principles and the universal framework of Islamic morality.

Theologically, provocative da'wah can be criticized because it has deviated from the main mandate of da'wah as stated in Surah An-Nahl verse 125. This verse establishes three hierarchical methodological pillars: al-hikmah (wisdom), al-mau'izhah al-hasanah (good advice), and al-mujādalāh bi al-latī hiya aḥsan (debate

¹⁹ al-Manduri, "Analisis Metode Dakwah (Qs. An-Nahl [16]125) Dalam Perspektif Filsafat Manajemen Dakwah."

²⁰ "Konsep Manajemen Dakwah dalam Al-Qur'an : Kajian terhadap Surat An-Nahl Ayat 125 | Jurnal Riset Rumpun Agama dan Filsafat," Accessed 13 September 2024
, <https://prin.or.id/index.php/JURRAFI/article/view/4456>.

in the best way).²¹). The phenomenon of provocative da'wah clearly ignores these three pillars. Instead of using wisdom that requires epistemic and contextual intelligence, this model of da'wah exploits the ignorance and emotions of the masses. Instead of conveying soothing mau'izhah hasanah (good advice), it spreads messages of hatred. And instead of conducting mujādalāh bi al-latī hiya aḥsan (religious dialogue), it chooses a demeaning and marginalizing debate method (mujādalāh bi al-latī hiya asyadd).

At the ethical level, the practice of provocative preaching is not merely a deviation from communication style, but rather a real and systematic violation of fundamental Islamic moral values.²² Islam places morality as the soul of all religious activities, including da'wah, to which the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent to perfect noble morality. Provocative da'wah, then, is not only technically flawed but also loses the very spirit and soul of the apostolic mission itself, transforming the divine message of rahmatan lil 'alamin into a tool for momentary gain.

The first value to be uprooted is al-hilm, which encompasses politeness, calmness, and wisdom in behavior. Provocative preaching undermines this principle by deliberately choosing harsh words, a high-pitched tone of voice, and aggressive body language to provoke emotions. Instead of calming and enlightening, provocative preachers construct narratives that inflame the situation, distancing the audience from the contemplative atmosphere and deep reflection necessary for understanding religious truth.

Worse still, this practice violates the principles of ar-rahmah (compassion) and al-'adl (justice). Merciful preaching always prioritizes empathy and gentleness, while provocative preaching is filled with hatred and stigmatization of different groups. The principle of justice is also violated because information is often distorted, context is omitted, and sentences are imposed haphazardly without

²¹Cecep Sobar Rochmat, Jaziela Huwaida, Rosendah Dwi Maulaya and Bagus Asri Wibawa. "Student Centered Learning in Debate-Based Learning Perspective Surah An-Nahl Verse 125." *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education* (2023). <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v7i2.318>.

²²Nurul Khotimah, Ilyas Supena, Nasihun Amin, Pandika Adi Putra and Ari Setyawan. "Analysis of Digital Da'wa Ideology on Social Media: A Case Study of Preaching Actors on Youtube." *Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal for Homiletic Studies* (2024). <https://doi.org/10.15575/idajhs.v18i2.33698>.

hearing the other party (*audi et alteram partem*), which is the essence of justice in Islam.

Sociologically, the function of da'wah, which should serve as a medium for social cohesion (*silaturrahim*), has instead been hijacked as a tool for division (*tafriqah*) and sowing hostility (*'adāwāh*). The resulting "us versus them" rhetoric has not only polarized society into hostile camps but also undermined the bonds of brotherhood among believers (*ukhuwah islamiyah*) and nationhood (*ukhuwah wathaniyah*). Da'wah, which should build bridges, has instead become a solid dividing wall.

Therefore, it can be concluded that provocative preaching suffers from a double failure. Methodologically, it is ineffective because it focuses more on creating superficial emotional engagement than on sustainable changes in understanding and behavior. Morally, it is flawed because it sacrifices the substantial truth of Islamic teachings—which uphold morality—in favor of the temporary and superficial pursuit of popularity, followers, and virality.

Ultimately, this practice contradicts the very nature of da'wah (Islamic preaching). Da'wah is supposed to lead humanity from darkness to light (*minazh zhulumati ilan nur*), but provocative da'wah actually creates new darkness: the darkness of hatred, prejudice, and division. It sacrifices the substance of profound and transformative truth for superficial and sensational impressions. Thus, it is not only un-Islamic but actively undermines the image and mission of Islam as a religion that brings peace and mercy to all beings.

Digital da'wah needs to be reconstructed based on a solid foundation of Islamic communication ethics. Islamic communication ethics is not an abstract concept, but rather is derived directly from the primary texts of Islam, the Qur'an and the Hadith. This foundation emphasizes the principles of *qaulan sadīdan* (true words) (QS. An-Nisa': 9), *qaulan ma'rūfan* (good words) (QS. An-Nisa': 5), *qaulan karīman* (noble words) (QS. Al-Isra': 23), *qaulan layyinan* (gentle words) (QS. Thaha: 44), and *qaulan balīghan* (words that leave an impression on the soul) (QS. An-Nisa': 63). Each of these principles has its own context of application and together form a

comprehensive ethical system to frame every communication activity, including digital da'wah.²³

2. Integration with Critical Digital Literacy

This ethical foundation must be integrated with critical digital literacy. Digital literacy here goes beyond the technical ability to use platforms; it encompasses a critical understanding of the digital ecosystem, including the intricacies of algorithms, the attention economy, and the psychological impact of viral content.²⁴ A preacher entering the digital space must be aware that social media algorithms tend to encourage emotional and provocative content. Therefore, digital literacy is an ethical prerequisite for not simply following the flow of algorithms but actively shaping them by producing quality content based on Islamic communication ethics, thereby competing for audience attention.

3. The Pillar of Moral Responsibility as a Counterbalance

Moral responsibility (moral responsibility belongs to every individual, every human being is asked to be accountable for all his words before Allah SWT, as stated in the words of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him say good or be silent" (HR. Bukhari-Muslim)²⁵ This moral responsibility has two dimensions: vertical (to God) and horizontal (to society). A digital preacher must be aware that every uploaded content has a real impact on religious understanding, social harmony, and the image of Islam. Therefore, the principle of prudence (ihtiyath) and consideration of the benefits and disadvantages must be the primary filters before disseminating a message.

This phenomenon has significant academic implications, particularly in enriching the contemporary body of thematic interpretation (al-tafsir al-mawdu'i) studies. Verses and hadiths on the ethics of communication and da'wah need to be

²³ Intiha'ul Khayaroh, "Media Komunikasi Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an: Relevansi Tradisi Lisan Dan Teknologi Digital Dalam Dakwah Islam," *Al Furqan: Jurnal Ilmu Al Quran Dan Tafsir* 7, no. 2 (2024): 317–32, <https://doi.org/10.58518/alfurqon.v7i2.3039>.

²⁴ Fadil Nurfalah Daulay dkk., "Strategi Literasi Dakwah Islam di Era Post-Truth dan Dirupsi Digital: A. Literasi Digital di Era Post-Truth B. Karakter Islam di Era Post-Truth C. Strategi Literasi Dakwah di Era Post-Truth D. Dampak Nyata Era Digital terhadap Pelaku Dakwah," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 2, no. 1 (2025), <https://jurnalal-ikhlas.com/PPAI/article/view/28>.

²⁵ Fadil Nurfalah Daulay dkk., "Strategi Literasi Dakwah Islam di Era Post-Truth dan Dirupsi Digital: A. Literasi Digital di Era Post-Truth B. Karakter Islam di Era Post-Truth C. Strategi Literasi Dakwah di Era Post-Truth D. Dampak Nyata Era Digital terhadap Pelaku Dakwah," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 2, no. 1 (2025), <https://jurnalal-ikhlas.com/PPAI/article/view/28>.

reinterpreted and contextualized within the realities of digital space, characterized by hyperreality and echo chambers. Academic studies can conduct interpretive *ijtihad* by formulating a systematic "Digital Da'wah Fiqh" framework. This framework will provide operational theological and ethical guidelines for da'wah practitioners, ensuring that their activities are not only viral but also moral.

Another academic implication is to encourage interdisciplinary convergence between Islamic studies and digital communication studies.²⁶ A monodisciplinary approach is no longer sufficient to understand the complexity of digital da'wah. Muslim scholars and scholars need to collaborate with experts in algorithms, media psychology, and social scientists to comprehensively analyze the impact of social media on religious understanding and to socially engineer a healthier and more ethical digital ecosystem.

On a practical level, this ethical framework must be translated into clear operational guidelines for digital preachers. These guidelines could include principles such as: (1) Always verify information (*tabayyun*) before disseminating it; (2) Prioritize educational content that solves community problems; (3) Avoid generalizations, stigmatization, and arbitrary law-making; (4) Use inclusive and unifying language; (5) Interact with netizen comments politely and wisely. Training and capacity building for preachers are also needed to improve their competence in producing creative yet integrity-based content.

Criticizing provocative da'wah and offering alternative ethical frameworks is not an attempt to silence the spirit of da'wah, but rather to channel it through appropriate, civilized, and effective channels. Responsible digital da'wah is da'wah that not only meets algorithmic engagement metrics, but more importantly, meets the standards of divine engagement—that is, engagement that is approved by Allah SWT because it aligns with Qur'anic principles and the morals of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Thus, digital da'wah will truly be a manifestation of Islam as a blessing for all nature (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*), capable of spreading coolness, enlightenment, and unity amidst the din of the digital space.

²⁶ Jauhari Minan, "Aktivisme Dakwah Siber di Tengah Konvergensi Media Digital," *DAKWATUNA: JURNAL DAKWAH DAN KOMUNIKASI ISLAM* 7, no. 2 (2021): 213–34.

F. Conclusion

First, this study firmly concludes that the phenomenon of provocative da'wah on social media is a form of deviation, both theologically and ethically, from Islamic teachings. Theologically, this practice contradicts the principles of Qur'anic da'wah in Surah An-Nahl verse 125, which emphasizes hikmah (wisdom), mau'izhah hasanah (good advice), and mujadalah bi al-lati hiya ahsan (debate in the best way). Ethically, provocative da'wah has violated fundamental Islamic moral values such as al-hilm (politeness), ar-rahmah (compassion), and al-'adl (justice), and changed the function of da'wah from unifying (silaturrahim) to divisive (tafriqah).

Second, as a solution, this study offers a reconstruction of digital da'wah ethics based on the three pillars of Surah An-Nahl verse 125, integrated with digital literacy and moral responsibility. This framework emphasizes a wise approach (hikmah) in selecting narratives and media, the production of inspiring and soothing content (mau'izhah hasanah), and the practice of polite dialogue and respect for differences (mujadalah bi al-lati hiya ahsan). Implementing this framework not only addresses the challenge of provocative da'wah but also fosters a digital ecosystem imbued with noble morals.

Third, this research has significant dual implications. Academically, it contributes to the development of contemporary thematic interpretation studies and the interdisciplinary convergence of religious studies and digital communication. Practically, it provides operational guidelines for preachers to create inspiring, unifying, and dignified da'wah content, thereby realizing the vision of Islam as a blessing for all creation (rahmatan lil 'alamin) in the digital space. Thus, digital da'wah not only meets algorithmic engagement metrics but, more importantly, meets the standards of divine engagement that are blessed by Allah SWT.

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