TRANSFORMATION OF SUFISTIC DAKWAH OF JAMA'AH AL KHIDMAH SOUTH SULAWESI IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Abd. Rahim[1], **Ulfa Kurnia**[2], **& Muhammad Naili**[3]

[1]Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia
[2,3]Universitas Muslim Indonesia, Indonesia
Correspondence Email: abd.rahim@umi.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research explores the transformation of Sufistic dakwah carried out by Jama'ah Al Khidmah in South Sulawesi, especially in the context of the digital era. Jama'ah Al Khidmah, one of the well-known Sufistic communities in Indonesia, faces new challenges in developing its dakwah along with the rapid development of digital technology. The qualitative research method with a case study approach involves in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. The data obtained was analyzed using a thematic approach to understand how this Sufistic dakwah adapts to digital media, such as social media and other online platforms. The results showed that Jama'ah Al Khidmah successfully integrated Sufistic values with digital technology to spread the teachings of Sufism, increase the reach of dakwah, and build a more inclusive and interactive community. The research also found that despite challenges in maintaining the authenticity of the teachings, the use of digital technology provides an excellent opportunity to introduce Sufism to the younger generation and the wider community. In conclusion, Sufistic dakwah in the digital era opens a new space for Jama'ah Al Khidmah to expand its influence while maintaining the relevance of Sufism teachings in the contemporary context.

Keywords: Sufistic dakwah; Al Khidmah jama'ah; digital transformation; sufism; social media

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly impacted various aspects of life, including religion and dakwah. Dakwah, which was previously carried out conventionally, is now transforming to adapt to the needs of the times. One of the groups that has also experienced changes in its dakwah approach is Jama'ah Al Khidmah in South Sulawesi. Jama'ah Al Khidmah uniquely conveys spiritual messages to the community as a movement based on Sufistic teachings. The transformation of dakwah carried out by this group is important to study in the digital era, where social media and online platforms are the primary mediums for

conveying religious messages (Azra, 2004). In the digital age, Sufistic dakwah faces different challenges and opportunities. Digital media offers broader and faster access and demands more interactive and creative delivery methods (Hasan, 2009). Jama'ah Al Khidmah, with its Sufistic approach that emphasizes cleanliness of heart and deep spiritual understanding, must adapt to maintain the relevance and reach of its dakwah. (Zulkifli, 2021).

People's lives in Indonesia are diverse, ranging from diversity in language, religion, ethnicity, race, gender, skin colour, social status and education. Nevertheless, there is something more important than all of that. The smallest element of the formation of society is the individual as a human being. Human life constantly changes from time to time to penetrate time and space. This is undoubtedly due to interaction with the surrounding environment. This often-changing condition requires humans to always be ready to live life (Asmaai, 2019).

Dakwah is an important part of spreading Islam's teachings and strengthening the people's spiritual life. Various approaches to dakwah have been carried out over the centuries, ranging from dakwah bil lisan (through speech) and bil hal (through deeds) to using written media. The dakwah approach must adapt to the ever-changing technological and cultural developments during changing times. One of the prominent phenomena in recent decades is the digitalization of dakwah, which utilizes information technology to reach a more expansive and heterogeneous audience (Azra, 2004). This trend is becoming increasingly relevant in Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Dawah groups, both traditional and modern, have begun to utilize social media, communication applications, and streaming platforms as mediums to convey Islamic teachings. Jama'ah Al Khidmah, a dakwah organization based on Sufistic teachings, also participates in this trend. Sufistic movements in Islam emphasize a profoundly spiritual approach and are often identified with mystical practices and cleanliness of the soul (Rahman, 1965). Jama'ah Al Khidmah, which originated from a Sufistic approach, has a strong base of followers in various regions, including South Sulawesi (Hasan, 2009).

The transformation of Jama'ah Al Khidmah's dakwah in the digital era is an interesting phenomenon to study because this organization must balance between maintaining the authenticity of Sufistic values and utilizing modern technology that is fast and dynamic. The digital era provides excellent opportunities for content distribution and interaction with audiences, but on the other hand, it also brings challenges in maintaining the spiritual essence of dakwah itself (Zulkifli, 2021). Social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and other platforms, have become new spaces for dakwah activities previously limited to mosques, majlis tackle, and other physical gatherings (Campbell, 2012).

Face-to-face communication is when two people pay attention to each other to convey the gist of the message. As a result, mutual respect develops between the communicators. Thus limiting the occurrence of misconceptions of the messages conveyed and received. However, when using digital devices, younger generations respond differently to digital. Younger ages multitask more when compared to earlier ages. Observations show that younger generations respond faster to digital devices and can use them effectively without instructions (Zaman, Ilman, Maulidi, 2023). According to Francis and Hoefel (2018), the younger generation uses

digital media for various purposes, including information, education, entertainment, and meeting communication needs.

This research departs from the desire to understand how Jama'ah Al Khidmah adapts to the digital era, how this transformation affects their dakwah strategy and its impact on the participation and religious understanding of the congregation. This transformation includes changes in delivery methods, the use of digital technology for congregational interaction, and the integration of Sufistic values in easily accessible digital media (Eickelmen, 2003). Understanding these aspects is important to see how traditional Sufistic movements can adapt without losing their essence during rapid technological development (Gade, 2010). This research aims to contribute to the dynamics of dakwah in the modern era and explain the role of technology in maintaining and developing Sufistic traditions in Indonesia. It is hoped that it can contribute to the study of changes in religious practices amid the digital revolution, as well as show how Sufistic groups such as Jama'ah Al Khidmah utilize technology to spread Islamic values effectively and by the essence of dakwah that they espouse (Rahman, 19820). This research also wants to show that technology is not just a tool but can be a catalyst in strengthening or even redefining religious practices (Patton, 2002).

Therefore, this research aims to analyze how the transformation of Sufistic dakwah of Jama'ah Al Khidmah in South Sulawesi takes place in the digital era and its impact on the congregation and the wider community.

2. METHODS

Data Analysis Technique Data were analyzed using the thematic analysis method, which involves identifying patterns and themes that emerge from qualitative data (Braun, 2009). Data analysis includes data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles, 2014). Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods to ensure consistency and accuracy of findings (Patton, 2002). The data sources in this study are divided into two main categories: primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with important figures in Jama'ah Al Khidmah, including administrators and active worshipers directly involved in digital dakwah activities. These interviews were designed using semi-structured questions, allowing researchers to dig deeper into information related to changes in the dakwah methods carried out by Jama'ah Al Khidmah and how they adapted to the digital era. In addition, researchers also collected secondary data, which included literature related to Sufistic dakwah, relevant articles, reports published by Jama'ah Al Khidmah, and recordings of dakwah activities disseminated on social media and digital platforms. This secondary data provides a broader understanding of the context of Jama'ah Al Khidmah's dakwah, both in terms of ideology and practices carried out by the congregation to reach a larger audience.

Data Collection Techniques Data collection techniques involved: In-depth Interviews: Interviews were conducted with semi-structured questions to gain deep insights into the changes in proselytization methods and the adaptations made (Kvale, 1996). Participatory Observation: Researchers directly observed dakwah activities conducted online, such as studies

via Zoom or streaming on YouTube and other social media (Angrosino, 2007). Documentation Analysis: Analysis was conducted on related documentation, such as lecture transcripts, dakwah content on digital platforms, and Jama'ah Al Khidmah annual reports (Bowen, 2009). In addition, participatory observation was carried out by following and observing dakwah activities online, such as studies through Zoom, live broadcasts on YouTube, and other dakwah activities on social media and digital platforms. This direct observation allows researchers to see first-hand how Sufistic dakwah is presented digitally and how worshipers interact in these activities. In addition, documentation analysis was conducted to study lecture transcripts, dakwah content published on social media, and Jama'ah Al Khidmah annual reports. All of this data provides a more comprehensive picture of the application of Sufistic dakwah in the digital world.

Data Analysis Technique Data were analyzed using the thematic analysis method, which involves identifying patterns and themes that emerge from qualitative data (Braun, 2009). Data analysis includes data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles, 2014). Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods to ensure consistency and accuracy of findings (Patton, 2002). This technique allows researchers to identify patterns and themes from the qualitative data. Data reduction is done by grouping relevant information to facilitate further analysis. The data that has been selected is then presented in the form of themes that facilitate understanding of the changes that occur in the preaching of Jama'ah Al Khidmah. Conclusions were drawn by considering the findings from various sources and methods used. To ensure data validity, this research uses source and method triangulation to ensure the consistency and accuracy of findings obtained from various data collected.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal several main results related to the transformation of Jama'ah Al Khidmah's dakwah in South Sulawesi in the digital era:

Digital Media Adaptation in the Dakwah of Jamaah Al-Khidmah

Digital Media Adaptation: Jama'ah Al Khidmah has adopted digital technology to expand the reach of their dakwah. Platforms like YouTube broadcast live lectures and studies and disseminate religious content in short videos and inspirational writings (Hasan, 2009). This allows them to reach more congregants outside the South Sulawesi region.

Advances in digital technology have brought about significant changes in how religious organizations deliver their teachings. During these changes, Jamaah Al-Khidmah is one example of an organization that can adapt well to these developments. Using digital platforms such as YouTube, they expand their dakwah's reach to a broader audience, including worshipers outside South Sulawesi.

Jamaah Al-Khidmah uses the YouTube platform as the primary means to broadcast their dakwah through lectures, studies, and other inspirational content. One of the advantages of using YouTube is its flexibility. Live streaming allows worshipers to follow the study in real-time, while saved videos allow those who do not have time to follow the live broadcast to watch it again at a more suitable time.

Beyond the delivery of dakwah, YouTube is also used by Jamaah Al-Khidmah as a promotional tool to introduce their boarding school. Uploaded videos often feature student activities, such as the learning process, the Qur'an memorization program, and other extracurricular activities. This content attracts potential students and demonstrates their commitment to quality religious education.

Undeniably, digital media has become a very effective tool for Jamaah Al-Khidmah to expand the impact of its dakwah. Through this technology, they can reach people from various backgrounds, including those who live in remote areas or have limited access to in-person religious activities.

The Role of Digital Media in Islamic Boarding School Life: Besides expanding dakwah, digital media also positively impacts life in Islamic Boarding Schools managed by Jamaah Al-Khidmah. Platforms such as YouTube and other social media allow Islamic Boarding Schools to show transparency in their management and activities. This is important for building public trust in religious education institutions.

For example, the uploaded videos often show students' daily lives, from learning activities and congregational prayers to special events such as the commemoration of Islamic holidays. This content inspires the community and provides an accurate picture of the values taught in the Islamic Boarding School. Thus, digital media has become an effective tool for promoting Islamic boarding schools while strengthening relationships with the community.

Conveyance of Sufistic Values that Remain Intact

Sufistic dakwah cannot be separated from the concept of dakwah carried out by the Prophet Muhammad as a role model. Dakwah activities have been started and exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad. He has given examples of good and faithful dakwah, such as 1) conveying the truth to his family and closest people (bi al-Lisan); 2) teaching tawhid and life to his people (bi al-Kalam); 3) giving examples of noble behaviour (morals) (bi al-Hal); and, 4) sending letters to his enemies and friends (bi al-Qalam). All of that depends on the Mad'u (object of dakwah) (Elmansyah, 2016).

Delivery of Sufistic Values: Despite switching to digital media, Jama'ah Al Khidmah has managed to maintain the essence of Sufistic dakwah. The messages delivered focus on spiritual development, self-introspection, and a deep dhikr approach. Content analysis shows that the language used is simple but loaded with Sufistic meaning, which makes dakwah easier for the congregation to understand and absorb (Zulkifli, 2021).

One uniqueness of Jamaah Al-Khidmah is its ability to maintain the essence of Sufistic dakwah during changes in media and technology. Sufistic values, such as self-introspection, spiritual development, and a deep dhikr approach, remain at the core of every message they convey.

Through digital content, Jamaah Al-Khidmah prioritizes simple yet meaningful language. The language used is not only easy to understand but also able to touch the hearts of worshipers. Their messages often invite audiences to reflect on the meaning of life, improve their relationship with Allah, and face life's challenges with a calm heart.

Zikir Approach as the Core of Dakwah: Zikir is one of the main elements in Jamaah Al-Khidmah's dakwah. In every lecture and study, they always emphasize the importance of dhikr in getting closer to Allah. This approach is very relevant in the modern era, where many people feel they have lost their inner peace due to high life pressure.

Digital content featuring zikr together or zikr guides has become very popular among worshippers. These videos provide practical guidance and create a calming atmosphere for the audience. In this way, Jamaah Al-Khidmah has made Sufistic values relevant and readily accepted by modern society.

The Importance of Simplicity in Message Delivery: Simplicity is one of the hallmarks of Jamaah Al-Khidmah's dakwah. In the digital context, this simplicity is reflected in the format and content of the content they present. Uploaded videos often feature lectures or studies with a simple visual layout without excessive effects. The main focus remains on the content of the message, not on the visual appearance.

This approach is efficient as it captures the audience's attention without distracting from the core message. This simplicity often makes the message more manageable for the congregation to absorb and understand.

Challenges in the Process of Digitalization of Dakwah

Despite successfully utilizing digital media to support its dakwah, Jamaah Al-Khidmah is not free from challenges. One of the biggest challenges is maintaining an emotional and spiritual bond with the congregation amidst media changes.

In face-to-face meetings, direct interaction between the speaker and the audience creates a deep connection. However, this interaction tends to diminish in the digital dakwah context. Audiences are usually just spectators without providing direct feedback. This can reduce the intensity of the spiritual connection that is built.

In addition, Jamaah Al-Khidmah also faces competition from other dakwah groups that utilize digital platforms to spread their teachings. This competition requires Jamaah Al-Khidmah to continue to innovate and present content that is interesting and relevant to the audience.

Congregational Participation and Interaction in the Digital Age (Continued)

Participation and Jamaah Interaction: The increased use of digital media in the dakwah of Jama'ah Al Khidmah has positively impacted participation, especially among the younger generation. Research shows that online dakwah activities facilitate access for those previously constrained by distance or time (Braun, 2006). However, there are significant differences in the level of interaction; congregants tend to be more passive when participating in digital dakwah than in physical meetings (Lincoln, 1985).

The increased use of digital media has had a significant positive impact on the level of participation of worshipers, especially the younger generation, who are more familiar with technology. This generation, often called "digital natives," tends to rely on the Internet to fulfil their spiritual needs. Through platforms such as YouTube, Jamaah Al-Khidmah provides easy access to dakwah content that can be accessed anytime and anywhere.

Videos available online allow congregants to re-watch lectures or studies that they feel are important, making the religious learning process more flexible. This ability to repeat material is a key advantage of digital dakwah compared to physical meetings, where only the audience can receive information in person.

Nonetheless, congregational participation in digital dakwah tends to be more passive than face-to-face meetings. Congregants often actively ask questions, discuss, or respond directly in direct recitation. In contrast, in digital dakwah, this interaction is limited to the comment section or live chat feature during the broadcast. Despite the passivity, digital platforms still provide significant benefits, especially for worshipers living in remote areas or in limited time.

Strategies to Address the Challenges of Digitalization

Challenges in the Digitization Process: Digitization brings challenges such as maintaining strong emotional and spiritual bonds between congregants, which are generally more intense in face-to-face meetings. In addition, there is fierce competition from various dakwah groups that utilize digital platforms to spread their teachings (Campell, 2012). This requires Jama'ah Al Khidmah to continue to innovate and present relevant and engaging content.

To face the challenges that arise in the digitalization process of dakwah, Jamaah Al-Khidmah has implemented several strategies to maintain the relevance and attractiveness of their dakwah. One of the key strategies is consistency in content uploading. The team managing their digital platform ensures that new content is uploaded regularly through lectures, dhikr, or other inspirational videos.

In addition, they also utilize the interactive features available on the digital platform. For example, in the live streaming session, they open space for worshipers to ask questions through live chat. The speaker answers These questions directly, creating a more personalized experience despite being online.

To face competition from other dakwah groups, Jamaah Al-Khidmah also seeks to strengthen its identity through consistent characteristics in every content. For example, their videos often feature visual elements such as simple calligraphy, soothing soundscapes, and distinctive language. These distinctive features set them apart from other groups and create a deep impression on the audience.

Positive Impact of Digitalization on Islamic Boarding Schools

Digital transformation also dramatically impacts the boarding school managed by Jamaah Al-Khidmah. In addition to being a means of promotion, digital media is also used to introduce Islamic Boarding School programs more widely. For example, videos showing students' daily lives provide a clear picture of the values taught in the Islamic Boarding School, such as discipline, independence, and sincerity in worship.

Digital media also allows Islamic Boarding Schools to strengthen relationships with parents. Parents can see their children's development first-hand by displaying student activities regularly on digital platforms. This not only increases trust in the Islamic Boarding School but also creates a sense of closeness between the Islamic Boarding School and the student's families.

Implications of Digital Transformation on the Future of Dakwah

The digital transformation undertaken by Jamaah Al-Khidmah illustrates how technology can be utilized to support dakwah in the future. Their success shows that technology is not a threat to traditional dakwah but rather an opportunity to expand its impact.

However, religious organizations must continue to innovate and adapt to technological change to maximize this potential. For example, artificial intelligence (AI) technology can compile more personalized dakwah materials according to the congregation's needs. Using sophisticated algorithms, content can be customized according to individual preferences, such as specific lecture themes or content formats most frequently accessed by worshipers.

In addition, virtual reality (VR) technology can also be one of the means of dakwah innovation in the future. With VR, worshipers can have a more immersive experience, such as participating in worship simulations or visiting Islamic historical sites virtually. This technology makes dakwah more interesting and provides an educational and spiritual experience.

However, the implementation of these new technologies requires investment in the form of training and the provision of adequate infrastructure. Therefore, Jamaah Al-Khidmah and similar organizations must work with other institutions, such as universities or technology companies, to develop innovative and affordable solutions.

The Role of the Young Generation in the Digitalization of Dakwah

The younger generation has a significant role in supporting the digitalization process of dakwah. As the group most familiar with technology, they are not only the main target of digital dakwah but can also contribute as content managers and media strategy developers.

In the context of Jamaah Al-Khidmah, the younger generation's involvement can be seen in the management of their YouTube channel. Young people with multimedia expertise are often involved in content production, such as shooting, editing videos, and managing social media accounts. This helps improve the quality of the content and allows the younger generation to contribute to dakwah activities actively.

In addition, the younger generation can also become dakwah ambassadors in their respective communities. By sharing Jamaah Al-Khidmah content through social media, they help expand the reach of dakwah to a broader audience. This role is vital, considering that social media is one of the leading platforms the younger generation uses to seek information and interact.

The Significance of Digital Dakwah to Religious Life

Digital preaching changes how religious messages are delivered and affects how people live their religious lives. With easier access to religious content, pilgrims can learn religious teachings more proactively and strengthen their relationship with Allah.

In the case of Jamaah Al-Khidmah, digital dakwah has helped many pilgrims deepen their understanding of Sufistic values. Video lectures on self-introspection, for example, often become

material for reflection for congregants facing life challenges. By watching these videos, they gain new insights and feel spiritually supported.

However, this ease of access also brings risks, such as spreading invalid information or misinterpreting religious teachings. Therefore, Jamaah Al-Khidmah and similar organizations must ensure that the content they upload is based on Islamic values and can be scientifically and theologically justified.

The research discussion on the transformation of Jama'ah Al Khidmah's dakwah in the digital era shows the dynamics of adaptation that combines traditional Sufistic values with modern technology. Technology integration allows the group to reach a wider audience and increase participation among young people who have a close attachment to the digital world (Azra, 2004). This research shows that the success of this adaptation is due primarily to Jama'ah Al Khidmah's ability to present content that remains relevant to Sufistic principles while utilizing digital platforms for distribution.

However, a key challenge in this process is maintaining the quality of the spiritual experience felt by the congregation. While technology can expand access, the depth of emotional connection often present in face-to-face meetings is complex and cannot be replicated through digital screens (Eickman, 2003). Therefore, an approach that combines online and offline meetings (hybrid) can be a solution to enrich the spiritual experience and maintain the quality of congregational interactions (Silverman, 2020).

Furthermore, this research emphasizes the importance of continuous innovation in facing competition in digital dakwah. Jama'ah Al Khidmah could consider training their dakwah team to understand digital content management better and engaging the tech-savvy younger generation to be involved in content management strategies (Patton, 2002).

4. CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the adaptation of Jamaah Al-Khidmah in utilizing digital media as a means of dakwah, as well as how Sufistic values are maintained despite using modern technology in delivering religious messages. Based on the findings, several important points can be drawn. First, Jamaah Al-Khidmah has successfully adopted digital technology, especially YouTube, as the primary medium in expanding the reach of their dakwah. Using this platform, they can broadcast live lectures and studies and disseminate religious content in various formats, such as short videos and inspirational writings. This allows them to reach a wider audience, including those outside the South Sulawesi region. This digital media is also utilized as a means of promoting the Islamic Boarding School they manage, as well as attracting new students. This shows how technology can be utilized to support the growth and expansion of dakwah effectively.

Second, despite the shift to digital media, Jamaah Al-Khidmah has managed to maintain the essence of its Sufistic dakwah. The dakwah messages focused on spiritual development, self-introspection, and deep dhikr practices. The language used in their dakwah content is simple but loaded with Sufistic meaning, making it easier for the congregation to understand and

absorb the message. Thus, despite changes in the way of delivering dakwah, the core values of Sufistic teachings are maintained without being eroded by technological developments.

Third, the biggest challenge faced by Jamaah Al-Khidmah in the digitalization process is maintaining strong emotional and spiritual bonds between congregants, which are generally more intense in face-to-face meetings. Although congregational interaction in digital dakwah tends to be more passive, they can benefit by quickly accessing dakwah material anytime and anywhere. In addition, they can also repeat videos or studies according to their needs. Competition with other dakwah groups that also utilize digital platforms is a challenge, which requires Jamaah Al-Khidmah to continue to innovate and present relevant and engaging content to the congregation.

Fourth, congregational participation in digital dakwah tends to be more passive when compared to physical meetings. However, even so, digital media allows worshipers to access dakwah content without being hindered by distance and time. The existence of dakwah content that can be repeated has a positive impact on those who want to deepen their understanding of religion, especially for the younger generation who are more familiar with technology. The younger generation's involvement in managing dakwah content also supports this digital dakwah's success.

Overall, this research shows that although digitalization dakwah presents its challenges, Jamaah Al-Khidmah can make good use of technology to expand the reach of their dakwah without sacrificing the characteristics of Sufistic values. The digital era does not change the essence of dakwah but only how it is delivered, thus allowing it to be more inclusive and accessible to various groups. By innovating, Jamaah Al-Khidmah can maintain its dakwah's relevance in rapid technological developments.

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