Da'wah bil Social Media: A Phenomenological Study of iGeneration TikTok Platform Users

Nadya Amalia Nasution[1]
1 Islamic Communication and Broadcasting, UIN Raden Intan Lampung
email: nadyaamalia@radenintan.ac.id

Abstract. This research examines the phenomenon of da'wah through social media (social media) carried out by iGeneration, especially UIN Raden Intan Lampung students, who are users of the TikTok platform. By using a phenomenological approach and integrating the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory with the concept of social media "affordances," this research aims to understand the experiences, strategies, and impacts of digital da'wah among Muslim students who use TikTok. Data collection methods include in-depth interviews, online participant observation, TikTok content analysis, and focus group discussions. The research results show that preaching content on TikTok acts as an effective stimulus, triggering cognitive and affective processes in the user (organism), which then produces a response in the form of increased religious awareness and changes in behavior. This research also reveals the critical role of TikTok affordances in shaping digital preaching practices and the ethical and theological challenges young preachers face. These findings provide in-depth insight into the transformation of da'wah practices in the digital era and the implications for Islamic education in higher education.

Keywords: Digital da'wah, TikTok, iGeneration, SOR theory, media affordances, phenomenology

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Information and communication technology development has significantly changed the landscape of Islamic da'wah. Social media, especially short video-based platforms such as TikTok, has become a new means for the young generation of Muslims to spread Islamic teachings. This phenomenon is interesting to study considering TikTok's unique characteristics, which prioritize creative, short, and viral content. With more than 1 billion active global users, TikTok has become a popular platform for entertainment and a medium for disseminating information and religious values.

iGeneration, or Generation Z, was born and raised in the digital era and has its own way of consuming and producing religious

content. They search for religious information online and are more receptive to visually appealing and entertaining messages. These characteristics make TikTok a very relevant platform for them in digital da'wah.

UIN Raden Intan Lampung students, as part of iGeneration, have a unique position in digital da'wah. They have not only grown up in the digital era but are also pursuing Islamic higher education, which gives them a deeper foundation of religious knowledge. The way they integrate academic learning with social media trends in the da'wah context is an exciting research focus.

Digital da'wah, as a concept, has been a research focus since the beginning of the internet era. Bunt (2003), in his book "Islam in the Digital Age," has identified the potential of the internet as a new medium for da'wah. Nurdin (2014) defined digital da'wah as "the process of conveying Islamic messages through digital media to invite people to the right path by Islamic teachings." This definition emphasizes the use of digital technology as a means to achieve traditional da'wah goals.

One of the main characteristics of digital da'wah is its interactivity. In contrast to conventional da'wah which tends to be one-way, digital da'wah allows for direct dialogue and interaction between the preacher and the mad'u (recipient of the da'wah). This aligns with Campbell's (2010) findings, highlighting how online religious communities form a dynamic space for discussion and exchanging ideas.

As a relatively new social media platform, TikTok has unique characteristics that influence how content is produced and consumed. Omar and Dequan (2020) found that the main motivations for using TikTok among young people include seeking entertainment, social interaction, and self-expression. Meanwhile, Herrman (2019) highlights how TikTok's highly personalizedalgorithm is important in promoting content and creating viral trends.

In the context of using TikTok for religious purposes, Iqbal (2019) has identified the emergence of the "Islamic TikTok"

phenomenon in Indonesia, where Muslim users use this platform to share religious

content. However, this research has yet to specifically discuss the use of TikTok by Islamic college students for da'wah purposes.

To understand the phenomenon of digital da'wah on TikTok, this research integrates two theoretical frameworks. First, the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory was developed by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953). This theory explains how can a communication message (stimulus) influence the attitudes and behavior of the message recipient (organism), which then produces a specific response? Yzer et al. (2018) have applied SOR theory to social media and found that message characteristics, such as visual appeal and personal relevance, play an important role in determining stimulus effectiveness.

The SOR theory is tabled as follows:
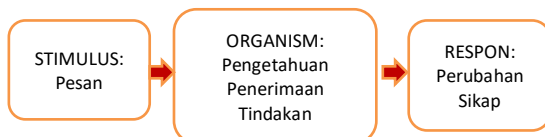
Picture 1 S-O-R Theory

Second, the concept of "Media Affordances" was developed by Gibson (1979) and adapted for social media studies by Boyd

(2010). Affordances refer to the possible actions offered by a technology or platform. Evans et al. (2017) have identified several key affordances of social media, including visibility, editability, persistence, and association. In the context of TikTok, Zulli and Zulli (2020) highlight the unique affordances of this platform, such as duets, challenges, and the highly personalized For You Page (FYP) algorithm.

Previous research has discussed using social media for da'wah, but most have focused on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. For example, Nurdin and Rusli (2013) researched the use of Facebook for da'wah among students, while Wibowo (2019) studied da'wah strategies on Instagram. Meanwhile, Iqbal (2019) has begun exploring the use of TikTok among Indonesian Muslims but focuses more on general religious practices rather than specific da'wah.

The novelty of this research lies in several aspects, specifically the TikTok platform as

a medium for preaching, which has unique characteristics compared to other social media platforms—an in-depth exploration of the perceptions of Islamic higher education students as consumers.

This research aims to fill the gap in the literature on digital da'wah, especially in the context of the use of TikTok by the young generation of Muslims who are also students of Islamic universities. Thus, it is hoped that this research can provide new insights into the dynamics of digital da'wah in the TikTok era, especially from the perspective of students, the young generation of Muslims, who are the main target of this content.

1.2. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological methods. Phenomenology was chosen because it allows researchers to explore subjective experiences and individual meanings of the phenomenon of da'wah on TikTok. Creswell (2013) emphasized that the phenomenological approach is suitable for understanding the essence of personal experiences related to certain phenomena.

The research design was exploratory and iterative, allowing flexibility in following themes that emerged during the research process. This is in line with the principles of grounded theory proposed by Charmaz (2006), where data collection and analysis are carried out simultaneously and influence each other.

The research participants were 20 active students of UIN Raden Intan Lampung aged 18-25 years who regularly watched preaching content on TikTok. They were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on criteria. Data was collected through several methods to ensure triangulation and richness of data, such as interviews, observation, and documentation. Triangulation of sources and methods was carried out to increase the credibility of the research. Data analysis also considers the SOR theoretical framework and the concept of media affordances to identify stimulus elements in TikTok content, cognitive and affective processes in the organism (user), and the resulting responses.

II. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1 Research ResultsStudent Perceptions of Da'wah Content on TikTok

The research results show that most UIN Raden Intan Lampung students positively perceive the presence of preaching content

on TikTok. They consider this platform an effective medium for spreading Islamic

teachings among the younger generation. Students appreciate TikTok's short video format, which allows religious messages to

be conveyed briefly and excitingly. One respondent stated,

"TikTok makes da'wah feel lighter and easier to digest. I can get Islamic inspiration in just seconds."

Account Name	followers	Content Type	Reasons to Like Igeneration
@kadamsidik00	6.1 M	Lifestyle Muslim	Educative content packaged briefly and interestingly by attractive young people
@portaldawah	1.6 M	Islamic Motivation, Q&A	Discussion of contemporary issues from an Islamic perspective, in the form of quotations.
@yufid.tv	26.2 k	Islamic Education, Animation, and Daily Prayer	Content that can be enjoyed with the family
@fqeofficial	36.8 k	Funny Islam, Meme	Memes and humor that are relatable to modern Muslim life
@triameriza	25.7 k	Muslimah, syar'I	Education can and Tifak can act as a Muslim

Table 1. Research results 2023

However, some students also expressed concerns about the depth of the content presented, considering the limited duration of TikTok videos. They emphasize the importance of verifying information

obtained from these platforms with more authoritative sources. Although generally positive, students also identified several challenges and criticisms of the da'wah phenomenon on TikTok. The main concern is the potential simplification of Islamic teachings to create viral content. Some students feel that some TikTok preachers

focus too much on the entertainment aspect and do not emphasize the substance of the teachings. There is also criticism of preachers who see themselves using religion to build personal branding or seek popularity. The credibility issue also emerged, with students highlighting the importance of verifying the background and qualifications of preachers active on TikTok. One respondent stated,

"Sometimes it's hard to differentiate between truly knowledgeable preachers and those who are just good at creating viral content."

Characteristics of Da'wah Content that Attracts Student Attention

Analysis of student responses revealed several characteristics of preaching content

that are considered attractive on TikTok. The use of catchy music, aesthetic visuals, and humorous delivery are often cited as elements that increase the attractiveness of content. Students also appreciate TikTok preachers who can connect Islamic teachings with contemporary issues or popular trends. Content that uses storytelling or provides practical tips for living an Islamic life effectively attracts attention and increases engagement. One participant commented,

"I like it when Ustaz on TikTok discusses the latest issues from an Islamic perspective. It makes religion feel more relevant to my daily life."

The Impact of TikTok Da'wah Content on Students' Religious Understanding

This research found that exposure to preaching content on TikTok had various impacts on students' religious understanding. Many respondents reported that the content helped them recall basic Islamic teachings or learn new perspectives on religious issues. Several students admitted they were

motivated to deepen their religious knowledge after watching preaching videos on TikTok. However, there are also concerns that the insights gained may need to be more superficial. One student stated,

"TikTok gave me a lot of ideas and inspiration about Islam, but I realized that for a deeper understanding, I needed to look for other sources."

The research results show that students tend to see da'wah on TikTok as a complement to, not a replacement for, traditional da'wah methods. They appreciate TikTok's accessibility and visual appeal but still feel

that in-depth study and direct interaction with scholars are essential. One student commented,

"TikTok is good for initial introduction or daily reminders, but I still prefer attending studies or reading books for deep understanding."

Some students also highlighted that interactions on TikTok are more superficial than face-to-face discussions in traditional settings.

2.2 Discussion

A Content Analysis of TikTok Preaching in a SOR Theoretical Framework

According to research results, the da'wah phenomenon on TikTok highlights the importance of simultaneously developing digital and religious literacy among students. Respondents felt they needed to be equipped with the ability to evaluate the credibility of online religious information sources, understand the context of the pieces of

information presented on TikTok, and be able to carry out further searches. Several students suggested that Islamic universities

such as UIN Raden Intan Lampung consider discussing social media and religion in their curriculum. One participant emphasized,

"We need to learn how to filter religious information on social media and not swallow at face value what we see on TikTok."

Applying the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory in analyzing TikTok preaching

content provides exciting insights into how students interact with the content. The stimulus in this context is viral preaching content on TikTok. Research shows that the most effective stimuli are videos that combine interesting visual elements, catchy audio, and relevant messages to students' daily lives. One respondent commented,

"Preaching videos that use hit songs or the latest TikTok trends always attract my attention, not to mention the handsome faces of young preachers. Without realizing it, I remember the Islamic messages."

This shows that the ability of content creators to take advantage of TikTok trends and features dramatically influences the effectiveness of the stimulus.

The organism, which is the student as an audience, responds to this stimulus through cognitive and affective processes. Cognitively, students report that they often

reflect on the preaching messages they watch, compare them with the knowledge they already have, and are sometimes encouraged to seek further information. TikTok preaching content effectively

triggers emotional responses, ranging from feeling touched to motivation to improve oneself. One student stated,

"Sometimes, a 15-second TikTok video can make me reflect on my life for the rest of the day."

Response, or the response produced, varies among students. The most common response is direct interaction with the content, such as

liking, commenting, or sharing the video. However, more significant responses include short-term behavioral changes, such as increasing the frequency of prayer services or trying to implement the advice in the video. Some students even report long-term changes in their religious views.

"After frequently watching preaching content on TikTok, I felt more motivated to study Islam deeply. I even started taking part in offline studies regularly,"

Interestingly, research also reveals that the effectiveness of the SOR model in the context of TikTok da'wah is strongly

influenced by factors such as the credibility of the content creator, conformity with the values held by students, and frequency of exposure. Content from preachers considered credible or consistent with students' existing religious understanding tends to produce stronger responses. Additionally, repeated exposure to specific preaching themes on TikTok increases the likelihood of changes in attitudes or behavior.

However, research also shows the limitations of the SOR model in this context. Some students resisted preaching messages that they considered too simplistic or manipulative, showing that 'organism' processes are only sometimes passive or easily predictable. This highlights the complexity of the interaction between digital preaching content and a critical and media-literate audience.

Analysis using SOR theory shows that the effectiveness of preaching content on TikTok is highly dependent on its ability to trigger positive cognitive and affective responses. Content that successfully balances emotional appeal with intellectual substance tends to generate stronger and more sustained conative responses. However, it should be noted that these responses may vary depending on students' characteristics, including their religious background knowledge and learning style preferences.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This research reveals that the da'wah phenomenon on TikTok significantly impacts the religious perceptions and understanding of UIN Raden Intan Lampung students. This platform has become an effective medium for spreading Islamic messages in an exciting and relevant way to the younger generation. TikTok's characteristics of prioritizing short, visual, and creative content have proven to attract students' attention and facilitate the absorption of religious information more easily. However, this research also identified

emerging challenges, including concerns about the depth and accuracy of content and

the potential for simplifying Islamic teachings for the sake of virality.

Analysis using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory shows that the effectiveness of preaching content on TikTok depends on its ability to trigger solid cognitive and affective responses in students. Content combining attractive visual elements, catchy audio, and relevant messages tends to produce a more significant impact. However, the 'organism' process is sometimes passive, with many students

showing a critical attitude towards the content they consume.

Although students generally view the presence of preaching content on TikTok positively, they also emphasize the importance of balancing digital content consumption with more traditional and in-depth religious learning methods. This shows that da'wah on TikTok should be seen as a complement, not a replacement, to conventional forms of da'wah.

This research also highlights the importance of simultaneously developing digital and religious literacy among students. Evaluating source credibility, understanding context,

and verifying information are crucial in dealing with the flow of religious content on social media.Overall, the preaching phenomenon on TikTok reflects the transformation of religious practice in the digital era, where the boundaries between entertainment and spiritual education are be coming increasingly blurred. These findings have important implications for Islamic educational institutions, preachers, and media policy developers in navigating the digital da'wah landscape. A balanced approach is needed between exploiting the potential of platforms like TikTok to reach the younger generation while maintaining the integrity and depth of Islamic teachings.

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