Digital Da'wah Trends in the Age of Social Media: A Bibliometric Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to answer five main research questions regarding the trends of digital da'wah in the age of social media: 1) How have scientific publications on digital da'wah evolved in recent years? 2) Who are the most productive researchers and institutions in this field? 3) What keywords and topics appear frequently in the literature on digital da'wah? 4) How have research issues on digital da'wah developed over time? 5) What academic databases are the main sources of publications on digital da'wah? The research method used is bibliometric analysis of 274 scholarly articles published between 2009 and 2024. Data were gathered from the Dimensions database using relevant keywords related to digital da'wah. The results show a significant growth in scholarly publications on digital da'wah, with an increasing number of articles published each year. The study also identifies the most productive researchers and institutions, as well as the most frequently used keywords in the literature. Furthermore, this research highlights major challenges in digital da'wah, such as misinformation, religious polarization, and ethical issues. The impact of this study provides a systematic overview of digital da'wah trends and helps researchers and practitioners understand the dynamics of da'wah in the digital era.
***Keywords**: Bibliometric analysis; digital da'wah; social media.*

INTRODUCTION

The digital age has brought about a fundamental transformation in the da'wah landscape, changing the way religious messages are delivered and received (Anderson, 2003; Mcclure, 2019). Religious interactions, which were previously limited to physical spaces such as mosques, taklim assemblies, or community meetings, have now moved online (Campbell, 2017). Social media, with all its various platforms, has become a new center for da'wah activities (Cheong et al., 2008; Hjarvard et al., 2012). This shift

creates a new dynamic in the dissemination of religious teachings, where preachers and audiences interact in a fast-paced and globally connected digital environment (Hoover & Echchaibi, 2023). This phenomenon marks a paradigm shift in da'wah, from traditional and localized to more modern and reaching a wider audience (Bukhari et al., 2023).

Social media, with its unique characteristics, offers tremendous potential as a contemporary da'wah arena (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Its wide reach allows religious messages to reach diverse audiences, crossing geographical, cultural and even faith boundaries (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Castells, 2015). High interactivity facilitates a two-way dialog between preachers and audiences, creating space for discussion, Q&A, and clarification (Jenkins, 2006; Shirky, 2019). The speed of information dissemination allows da'wah content to go viral and reach millions of people in a short period of time (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Features such as live streaming, discussion groups, and thematic hashtags further enrich the digital da'wah ecosystem, making it an attractive option for preachers and audiences looking for new ways to interact and learn about religion (Bruns & Burgess, 2011; Kholifah & Hikmah, 2024).

Despite offering great potential, digital da'wah also faces various complex challenges (Lövheim & Campbell, 2017; Radde-Antweiler, 2008). Lestari & Saidah (2023) point out that one of the main issues is the spread of religion-related misinformation and disinformation, which can mislead and trigger conflict (Vosoughi et al., 2018; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Faith-based hate speech is also a serious problem, creating a toxic and divisive online environment (Evolvi, 2019; Gagliardone et al., 2015). Polarization of religious views is often amplified by social media algorithms, which tend to display content that matches users' preferences, thereby narrowing horizons and deepening divisions (Pariser, 2011; Sunstein, 2017). Besides that, ethical issues such as privacy, authenticity of preachers, and commercialization of preaching also need serious attention in the growing digital preaching ecosystem (Campbell & Garner, 2017; Hutchings, 2017).

The significance of digital da'wah lies in its great potential to influence religious understanding, practice and expression, especially among the younger generation who grew up in the digital age (Palfrey & Gasser, 2011; Prensky, 2001). Easy and quick access to various online da'wah content can shape the way they understand religious teachings, interact with religious communities and express their religious identity

(Eickelman, 2003; Mandaville, 2007). Furthermore, digital proselytizing can play a role in shaping public opinion on religious issues, promoting tolerance and interfaith harmony, or conversely, reinforcing prejudices and stereotypes (Awan, 2017). Therefore, an in-depth understanding of the trends and dynamics of digital da'wah is crucial to optimize its positive potential and mitigate its negative risks (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2009; Sanni, 2012).

Although research on digital da'wah has begun to grow, there is still a significant gap in comprehensively mapping digital da'wah trends in the social media era (Hjarvard, 2008; Lövheim & Campbell, 2017). Many existing studies tend to focus on specific aspects, such as the use of specific platforms, content strategies, or impact on specific audience groups (Miller et al., 2016). Not many studies have tried to map the digital da'wah landscape holistically, identifying common patterns, emerging trends, and crucial issues that need further attention (van Dijck, 2013). A bibliometric approach, which enables quantitative analysis of scientific literature, can fill this gap by providing a broader and more systematic picture of the development of digital da'wah studies (Broadus, 1987; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

Several early studies have explored the use of social media in the context of da'wah, looking at how preachers utilize platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to spread religious messages (Piela, 2013; Sisler, 2011). These studies highlighted various strategies used, ranging from posting textual and visual content, live streaming of lectures, to direct interaction with audiences through commenting and messaging features (Beta, 2019; Nisa, 2013). There are also studies that examine the effectiveness of different types of da'wah content, such as short videos, memes, infographics and podcasts, in attracting attention and influencing audience understanding (Miladi, 2016; Pennington, 2018).

Previous research has also examined various aspects related to digital da'wah, such as its influence on online religious identity, virtual community dynamics, and ethical challenges faced (Glänzel & Schubert, 2006). Some studies focus on qualitative analysis of da'wah content, identifying dominant narratives, issues raised, and language styles used (Slama, 2018). However, these studies tend to be case studies or limited to a specific geographical scope or platform. Meanwhile, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive bibliometric analysis, covering a wide range of scholarly databases and a longer period of time, to map digital da'wah

trends in greater breadth and depth.

This research offers novelty by applying a bibliometric approach to map digital da'wah trends in the social media era. This approach has not been widely used in digital da'wah studies, which tend to be dominated by qualitative or survey methods (Creswell, 2017). Bibliometric analysis allows the identification of patterns of scientific publications, collaboration between researchers, the most frequently occurring keywords, and the development of research issues over time. By analyzing publication data from various scientific databases, this research can provide a more objective and systematic picture of the development of digital da'wah studies, as well as identify research gaps that need to be filled.

Based on the background and research gaps that have been described, this study asks several main research questions: 1) what is the trend of scientific publications on digital da'wah in the era of social media in recent years, 2) who are the most productive researchers and institutions in this field, 3) what are the keywords and topics that appear most frequently in the literature on digital da'wah? 4) how have research issues on digital da'wah evolved over time? 5) what scientific databases are the main sources of publications on digital da'wah?

This research uses a quantitative approach with bibliometric methods to analyze the scientific literature on digital da'wah (Nahdiyin & Anwar, 2025). The research data was extracted from the Dimensions database, focusing on scholarly articles published between 2009 and 2024. An advanced search was conducted on November 20, 2024 using the keywords: "digital da'wah", "digital preaching", "digital sermon", "digital Islamic preaching", "online preaching", "online sermon", or "digital Islamic sermon". The Boolean search technique is used to ensure that the literature obtained is relevant. From the initial search results of 302 documents, data cleaning was carried out so that 274 scientific articles that met the criteria remained. This data was then extracted in CSV (comma-separated values) format to facilitate processing. Next, the data was imported into Biblioshiny, a web interface developed by Bibliometrix (Zupic & Čater, 2015), for bibliometric analysis and visualization. This research produced visualizations and tables illustrating relationships between researchers, institutions, keywords, and research topics, as well as analyzing research trends by author, year, citations, country, and source of information. The analysis includes: co-authorship analysis to identify collaborations; co-occurrence analysis to identify keywords and topics that often appear

together; and trend analysis to see the development of research issues over time. Additionally, a qualitative content analysis was conducted on the top 20 most-cited articles to identify substantive themes, methodological approaches, and practical implications. The results of this analysis were then interpreted in depth to answer the research questions.

Table 1. Data Source Set and Selection

Category	Information
Database Research	Dimensions
Time Range	2009-2024
Language	English & Indonesian
Keyword Search	"Digital Da'wah" OR "Digital Preaching" OR "Digital Sermon" OR "Digital Islamic Preaching" OR "Online Da'wah" OR "Online Preaching" OR "Digital Islamic Preaching"
Document Type	"Article"
Data Extraction	Exported with complete records (Cited, Abstract & Keywords, and Other Information) in CSV format
Sample Size	274

Source: Author's Observation, 2025

The decision to use Dimensions as the primary database was based on several considerations: (1) its comprehensive coverage of open access and non-traditional publications, particularly relevant for capturing regional scholarship from Indonesia and Malaysia; (2) its inclusion of publications in multiple languages including Indonesian; and (3) its robust metadata for bibliometric analysis. However, we acknowledge that this single-database approach has limitations. Publications indexed exclusively in Web of Science, Scopus, or Google Scholar may have been missed, potentially affecting the comprehensiveness of our findings. Future research should consider multi-database triangulation to validate and extend these results. Despite this limitation, Dimensions' coverage of over 130 million publications and its particular strength in capturing diverse geographical and linguistic scholarship makes it a valuable source for mapping the digital da'wah landscape, especially given the dominance of Indonesian and Malaysian contributions to this field.

Using the search criteria "Digital Da'wah" or "Digital Preaching" or "Digital Sermon" or "Digital Islamic Preaching" or "Online Da'wah" or "Online Preaching" or "Digital Islamic Preaching" over a time span covering the development of scientific articles published from 2009 to 2024

allows researchers to analyze long-term research trends. A total of 274 documents representing scholarly articles were reviewed and processed in this bibliometric study. This dataset was generated by extracting information from the Dimensions database. In this study, the key information extracted from the data extraction process forms an important foundation for the bibliometric analysis of digital proselytization topics in the digital age. The datasets used have been carefully organized, and the results have been neatly presented in Table 2, presenting a comprehensive overview that supports the research objectives.

This research has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, this research only focuses on scientific publications indexed in Dimensions, so it does not cover all publications on digital da'wah that may exist in other databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, or discipline-specific repositories. This may result in an underrepresentation of certain types of scholarship, particularly from regions with different indexing practices. Second, bibliometric analysis is inherently quantitative, so it cannot explore meaning and context in depth as qualitative methods can do. To partially address this, we supplemented the bibliometric analysis with a qualitative review of highly-cited works. Third, this study is limited to publications up to 2024, so it cannot cover the most recent developments that may have occurred after the data collection period. Fourth, the dominance of Indonesian and Malaysian publications in our dataset may limit the generalizability of findings to other geographical and cultural contexts where digital da'wah practices and scholarly traditions may differ significantly. Nonetheless, the results of this study still provide a valuable overview of digital da'wah trends within the captured literature and can serve as a basis for further research, including comparative studies across different regional contexts and multi-database validation studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The words searched from Dimensions were "Digital Da'wah" or "Digital Preaching" or "Digital Sermon" or "Digital Islamic Preaching" or "Online Da'wah" or "Online Preaching" or "Digital Islamic Preaching" and the time span of scholarly articles from 2009 to 2024 was used as the criteria for this dataset. The following key information about this dataset has been extracted and summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Primary Information of the Dataset

Description	Result
Timespan	2009:2024
Sources (Journal, book, etc.)	227
Documents	274
Annual Growth Rate %	31.24
Document Average Age	1.68
Average citations per doc	1.412
References	0
Document Contens	
Keywords Plus (ID)	0
Author's Keywords (DE)	0
Authors	
Authors	628
Authors of single-authored docs	87
Authors Collaboration	
Description	Result
Timespan	2009:2024
Sources (Journal, book, etc.)	227
Documents	274
Annual Growth Rate %	31.24
Document Average Age	1.68
Average citations per doc	1.412
References	0

Source: Author's Observation, 2025

A total of 274 scientific documents on the theme of digital da'wah were identified in the span of 2009-2024. This number of publications shows a significant upward trend with an annual growth rate of around 31%, reflecting the growing academic interest in the topic of da'wah in the digital realm (Wahid, 2024). This is in line with previous bibliometric findings that show an acceleration of scholarly attention on Islamic issues and digital technologies since the last decade (Donthu et al., 2021; Wahid, 2024) This collection of digital da'wah literature tends to be young (average document age ±1.68 years), indicating a research focus centered on recent developments. Nonetheless, the citation impact of these works is still moderate with an average of 1.4 citations per document, meaning that the topic is still evolving and cross-citation opportunities are still open (Donthu et al., 2021). In terms of authors, a total of 628 authors contributed to this publication, with 87 documents written by a single author, while the average number of authors per document was 2.47, indicating a high level of collaboration. However, the percentage of international collaboration is still

low, only 0.299%, which indicates that studies related to digital proselytization are generally conducted by researchers from a single country or local research groups.

The remarkably low rate of international collaboration (0.299%) warrants deeper examination as it represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the field. Several factors may contribute to this phenomenon: (1) Language barriers - much of the digital da'wah scholarship is published in Indonesian or Malay, limiting accessibility to international collaborators; (2) Regional focus - the concentration of Muslim populations and digital da'wah activities in Southeast Asia may create a natural research boundary; (3) Funding constraints - limited resources for international research partnerships in developing countries where most digital da'wah research occurs; (4) Institutional networks - the absence of established international research networks specifically focused on digital Islamic communication; and (5) Methodological preferences - the dominance of qualitative, context-specific case studies may be less conducive to international collaboration compared to quantitative or experimental designs. To enhance international collaboration, several strategies could be implemented: establishing regional research consortia, creating multilingual publication platforms, developing international funding mechanisms for comparative studies, organizing international conferences specifically on digital da'wah, and encouraging cross-regional mentorship programs between established and emerging scholars. Such initiatives could enrich the field by bringing diverse perspectives, enabling comparative analyses across different cultural contexts, and increasing the global visibility and impact of digital da'wah research.

Table 3. Top Ten Authors

Author	Affiliation	Number of Articles	Total Citations	Total Citations per Year
Mustafar Mzi	Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia	4	2	0.333
Ab. Mr. Aziz	Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia	3	4	0.5
Abduh M	Institut Agama Islam Tasikmalaya, Indonesia	3	1	0.167
Abdullah A	Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia	3	35	4.375

As'ad M	STMIK PPKIA Pradnya Paramita Malang, Indonesia	3	3	0.667
Rohmatulloh Dm	Utrecht University, Netherland	3	4	2
Rustandi R	Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati, Indonesia	3	15	5.883
Sunaryanto S	Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Dakwah Dirosat Islamiyah Al-Hikmah Jakarta, Indonesia	3	1	0.333
Ab. Mr. Aziz	Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia	3	4	0.5
Abduh M	Institut Agama Islam Tasikmalaya, Indonesia	3	1	0.167
Abdullah A	Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia	3	35	4.375
As'ad M	STMIK PPKIA Pradnya Paramita Malang, Indonesia	3	3	0.667
Rohmatulloh Dm	Utrecht University, Netherland	3	4	2
Rustandi R	Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati, Indonesia	3	15	5.883
Sunaryanto S	Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Dakwah Dirosat Islamiyah Al-Hikmah Jakarta, Indonesia	3	1	0.333
Ab. Mr. Aziz	Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia	3	4	0.5
Abduh M	Institut Agama Islam Tasikmalaya, Indonesia	3	1	0.167
Abdullah A	Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia	3	35	4.375
Adeni A	UIN Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia	2	0	0
Al-Hakim L	UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia	2	0	0

Source: Author's Observation, 2025

In terms of author productivity, there are a number of prominent

researchers who are major contributors to the digital proselytization literature. Table 3 displays the top 10 authors and their affiliations. Author *Abdullah A.* (Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia, Indonesia) tops the list with 3 publications and a total of 35 citations, reflecting the significant contribution and impact of his work. Abdullah A.'s publications focusing on da'wah in the internet era proved to be widely referenced, showing high relevance to other research in this area. In the next position, *Rustandi R.* (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, Indonesia) also has 3 publications with 15 citations, as well as *Rohmatulloh D.M.* (Utrecht University, Netherlands) with 3 publications and 4 citations. The presence of Rohmatulloh D.M. shows that despite low international collaboration, there are influential individual contributions from abroad on this topic. Some other authors such as *Ab. Aziz M.R.* (Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia), *As'ad M.* (STMIK Pradnya Paramita Malang, Indonesia), and *Abduh M.* (Institut Agama Islam Tasikmalaya, Indonesia) each also produced 2-3 articles related to digital da'wah, although the citation count was relatively lower. These active researchers have written about various aspects of digital da'wah, such as da'wah strategies for the millennial generation (Nugraha et al., 2020) and the use of new media in education and da'wah dissemination (Muhaemin, 2017). Overall, the distribution of author productivity shows that academics in Indonesia and Malaysia are the main drivers of digital da'wah studies, in line with the strong Muslim population base and institutional attention in both countries (Mardiana, 2020). These highly-cited prolific authors can be considered key opinion leaders in digital da'wah research, whose work serves as an important reference for other researchers.

Table 4. Most local cited references

No.	Number of Citations	Author	Year	Article Title	Sources
1	53	Akmaliah W	2020	The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities	Indonesian Journal of Islam And Muslim Societies
2	35	Zubaidi IB	2017	Developing a Digital Currency	International Business Research

				From An Islamic Perspective: Case of Blockchain Technology	
3	20	Kasri RA	2022	Digital Payment And Banking Stability In Emerging Economy With Dual Banking System	Heliyon
4	14	Laily IM	2022	Instagram Sebagai Media Pembelajaran Digital Agama Islam Di Era 4.0	Munaddhomah Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam
5	14	Ismail	2018	Pesan Dakwah Tentang Nikah Di Media Sosial Instagram	Tabligh: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam
6	13	Nugraha RH	2020	Motivasi Hijrah Milenial Muslim Perkotaan Melalui Dakwah Digital	Muharrik Jurnal Dakwah Dan Sosial
7	13	Muhaemin E	2017	Dakwah Digital Akademisi Dakwah	Ilmu Dakwah Academic Journal For Homiletic Studies
8	10	Ummah AH	2020	Podcast Sebagai Strategi Dakwah Di Era Digital: Analisis Peluang Dan Tantangan	Komunike
9	9	Lestari PP	2020	Dakwah Digital Untuk Generasi Milenial	Jurnal Dakwah
10	8	Nawi A	2020	The Needs of Islamic Digital Resources in Polytechnic Brunei Darussalam: A	International Journal of Instruction

	Preliminary Study

Source: Author's Observation, 2025

In addition to author performance, the core literature on which digital da'wah research is based is also mapped through citation analysis. Table 4 presents the 10 most cited scientific papers by publications in this dataset. The top position is occupied by Akmaliah's (2020) article titled *"The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities"*, with 53 citations. The high frequency of references to (Akmaliah, 2020) work shows that the issue of shifting religious authority and contestation of moderate Islam in the new media era is a central theme that influences much subsequent digital da'wah research. This article, published in the *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, discusses how digital media is used by various groups to seize authority in Islamic discourse, and its findings have become an important reference for the study of da'wah and online media.

A deeper analysis of Akmaliah's (2020) seminal work reveals several key insights that have shaped subsequent research: the article demonstrates how digital platforms have democratized religious authority, allowing non-traditional actors to challenge established religious institutions; it highlights the tension between moderate and conservative Islamic voices in online spaces; and it raises concerns about the potential for extremist narratives to gain traction through sophisticated digital strategies. These themes have resonated strongly with researchers seeking to understand the complex dynamics of digital da'wah, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts where religious moderation has been a policy priority. The work's influence extends beyond citation counts—it has established a conceptual framework for analyzing power dynamics in digital religious communication that subsequent studies have adopted and adapted.

Zubaidi's (2017) work on the development of digital currency in an Islamic perspective (Blockchain Sharia) ranks second with 35 citations, indicating the intersection between the topic of digital da'wah and Islamic digital economic studies. Although not classified as "da'wah" in the narrow sense, the Islamic fintech research is frequently cited and relevant within the framework of digital transformation in Muslim communities. The next sequence shows the diversity of key topics: Kasri (2022) on digital payments and Islamic banking stability (20 citations), Laily (2022) on Instagram as a medium for Islamic learning (14 citations), and (Ismail et al., 2018) who

analyzed wedding da'wah messages on Instagram (14 citations). Laily's (2022) work, for example, explains how the Instagram platform is utilized as a means of Islamic education in the 4.0 era, thus becoming a reference for da'wah research through social media. Similarly, Ismail et al., (2018) study of da'wah content on social media enriches understanding of methods of delivering religious messages to young audiences.

The platform-specific studies by Laily (2022) and Ismail et al. (2018) offer practical insights for da'wah practitioners: both studies found that visual-centric platforms like Instagram are particularly effective for reaching younger audiences; successful da'wah content tends to combine aesthetic appeal with accessible religious messaging; and interactive features (comments, stories, live sessions) significantly enhance engagement compared to one-way broadcasting. However, these studies also identified challenges: the risk of oversimplifying complex religious concepts for social media consumption, the pressure to prioritize virality over accuracy, and the difficulty of maintaining authenticity in highly curated digital environments. These practical findings have important implications for training programs for digital da'i and for institutional strategies in Islamic education.

Some other articles that are often referenced include Nugraha (2020) on the motivation for hijrah of the millennial generation through digital da'wah and Ummah (2020) on the use of podcasts as a da'wah strategy in the digital era. Overall, this most influential bibliography shows that contestation of religious authority, utilization of social media platforms for da'wah, and even aspects of Islamic financial technology are fundamental themes that underpin much digital da'wah research (Akmaliah, 2020; Laily et al., 2022). This means that digital da'wah studies develop by referring to cross-disciplinary literature - ranging from socio-religious, communication, to technology - which is considered relevant in understanding the transformation of da'wah in the digital era.
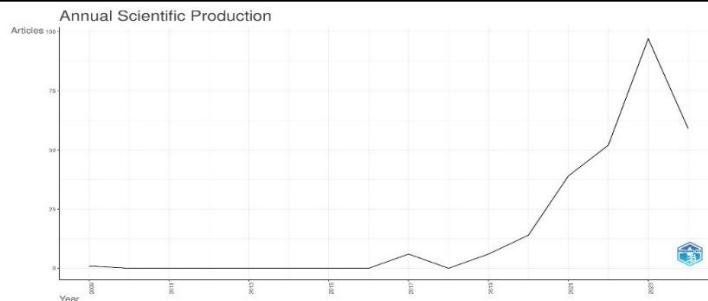
Source: Author's Observation, 2025

Figure 1. Annual scientific arcticle production
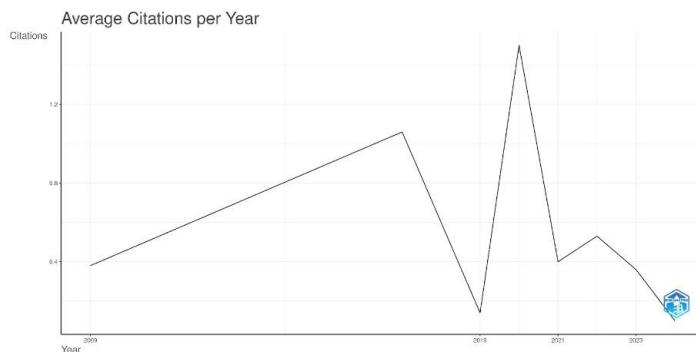
Source: Author's Observation, 2025

Figure 2. Average citation per year

Article production per year shows a fluctuating pattern with several periods of spikes in attention. In general, there has been an increase in the number of publications per year since 2009, reaching a peak in 2024 as proselytizing through social media and digital platforms becomes more popularfer (Marwantika, 2021). Interestingly, the average citations per article per year are not always linear with the number of publications. 2020 saw the highest spike in citations, which can be attributed to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic - a period in which proselytization activities shifted massively to the online medium (Ermayani et al., 2021). Pandemic conditions forced the intensification of the use of digital platforms for da'wah, so works published around that year were more referenced as the relevance of digital da'wah increased in conditions of face-to-face

limitations (Ermayani et al., 2021). After 2020, the annual citation rate tends to decrease again; this could indicate that although publications continue to increase, the focus of researchers' references may shift or spread to other related themes in subsequent years. Nevertheless, the overall fluctuation confirms that digital proselytization was at the center of academic attention, especially during the global crisis, before stabilizing back to normal trends.

A more granular analysis of publication trends reveals distinct phases in the evolution of digital da'wah scholarship: (1) Exploratory Phase (2009-2015): characterized by sparse publications, primarily descriptive studies of early social media adoption by preachers; (2) Growth Phase (2016-2019): marked by increasing academic interest, emergence of platform-specific studies (Facebook, YouTube), and initial theoretical frameworks; (3) Pandemic Acceleration Phase (2020-2021): explosive growth driven by forced digitalization, with research focusing on crisis communication, virtual religious practices, and rapid platform adoption; and (4) Maturation Phase (2022-2024): sustained high publication volume with more sophisticated analyses, including algorithmic impacts, monetization issues, and comparative studies. The citation patterns also reveal temporal dynamics: pre-pandemic works that established foundational concepts continue to be cited, while pandemic-era publications gained rapid attention due to immediate relevance but may have shorter citation half-lives as the field moves beyond crisis-focused research. This temporal analysis suggests that the field is transitioning from reactive documentation of digital transformation to proactive theorization and critical evaluation of digital da'wah practices and impacts.
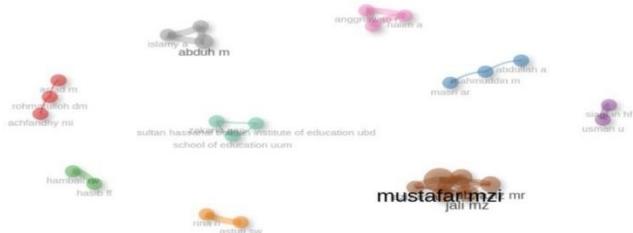
Source: Author's Observation, 2025

Figure 3. Mapping Collaboration between Authors

Network analysis of co-authorship deepens the understanding of collaboration patterns among researchers. The network visualization (Figure 3) shows the formation of several clusters of collaboration between authors connected by co-authorship links. The largest cluster is shown in brown, with one core researcher at the center of the collaboration network. This researcher - let's call him *Mustafa T.* (based on the data, associated with a Malaysian researcher) - has collaborative connections with many other authors, making him the central actor in the digital proselytization network. This pattern is common in science where a few key researchers act as hubs that drive collaborative research (Solehuddin et al., 2022).

In addition to the main cluster, there are several smaller-scale collaboration clusters with fewer authors and more limited relationships. For example, a red cluster consisting of three authors (*As'ad M.*, *Rohmatulloh D.M.*, and *Achfandhy M.I.*) who collaborate closely within their own group was identified. Similarly, the green cluster shows a duo of authors (*Hambali R.W.* and *Hasib F.F.*) who work exclusively together, while the purple cluster connects two authors (*Siagian H.F.* and *Usman U.*) who collaborate within a limited scope. The existence of some of these pairwise clusters suggests specific collaborations, possibly based on institutional similarities or specific research projects. Interestingly, the analysis also found collaboration clusters involving institutional affiliation, such as the "light green" cluster that links the Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Institute of Education, UBD (Brunei) with the School of Education, UUM (Malaysia).

The presence of institutional names in these author networks indicates formal collaboration between institutions, which in the context of digital proselytization can mean joint research across universities or across countries. Overall, the patterns of collaboration among authors in the field of digital da'wah are very diverse: one large cluster dominates the network with extensive linkages, while other clusters are smaller in scale and focus. This phenomenon underscores the existence of key authors who act as links between many researchers, alongside independent collaborative groups that address specific topics (Wahid, 2024). For the development of this field, strengthening connections between separate clusters and encouraging international collaboration can be a strategy to expand the scientific network of digital da'wah.
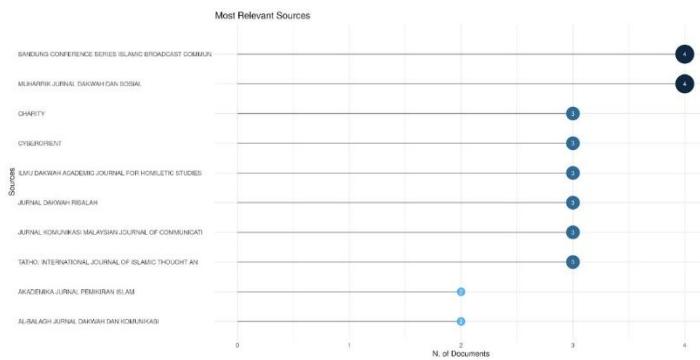
Source: Author's Observation, 2025

Figure 4. Most Relevant Sources

In terms of publication sources, digital da'wah research is spread across various journals and proceedings, but there are some dominant core journals. Figure 3 displays the most relevant sources (journals/proceedings) based on the number of digital da'wah-related articles published. The top two sources with the largest contribution (each publishing 4 articles) are *Bandung Conference Series: Islamic Broadcasting Communication* and *Muharrik: Journal of Da'wah and Social*. The high number of articles in these two media shows that they are the main reference and platform for digital da'wah research publications, at least within the regional scope (Indonesia/Malaysia). Muharrik Journal, for example, specifically focuses on communication and da'wah issues, so it is natural to be a place to publish the results of digital da'wah research (Nugraha et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, the *Bandung Conference Series* shows that conference proceedings also play an important role in disseminating digital da'wah studies, possibly because this topic develops dynamically so that many are presented in scientific forums before being published in journals. In addition to the two main sources above, there are six other journals that published 3 articles each related to digital da'wah, namely *Charity*, *CyberOrient*, *Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal for Homiletic Studies*, *Journal of Da'wah Risalah*, *Malaysian Journal of Communication*, and *Tatho: International Journal of Islamic Thought*. This diversity of titles reflects the interdisciplinary nature of digital da'wah - articles related to this topic appear both in Islamic da'wah/communication journals (such as Ilmu Dakwah, Risalah, Al-Balagh) and in international journals of communication and digital media studies (*CyberOrient*, *Malaysian Journal of Communication*).

In fact, cross-disciplinary journals such as the *Tabligh: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* have also published digital da'wah studies (e.g. on da'wah content on Instagram; Ismail et al., 2018), indicating the broad spectrum of academic forums that pay attention to this theme. In addition, several other journals contributed 2 articles on this topic, including *Jurnal Akademika: Islamic Thought* and *Al-Balagh Journal of Da'wah and Communication*. Although the number of articles in these sources is smaller, the existence of publications in these various journals still makes a significant contribution to the development of digital da'wah discourse (Lestari, 2020)
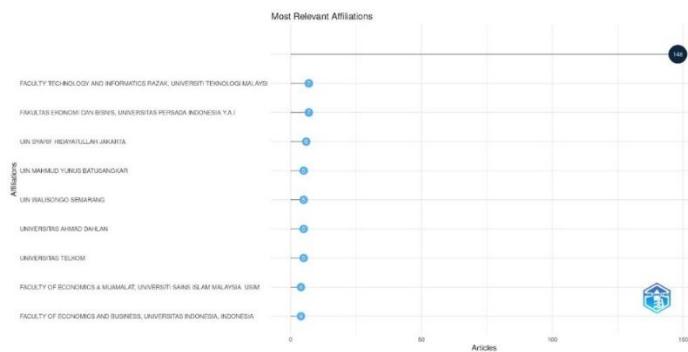
Source: Author's Observation, 2025

Figure 5. Most Relevant Affiliations

From an institutional affiliation perspective, the largest contributions to digital proselytization research come from universities in Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia. Figure 5 shows the most productive institutional affiliations. *The Razak Faculty of Technology and Informatics, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)* and *the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Persada Indonesia Y.A.I* emerged as the most dominant institutions with each publishing 7 articles related to digital da'wah. The dominance of UTM (Malaysia) and UPI Y.A.I (Indonesia) reflects the important role of both countries in the digital da'wah landscape: Malaysia is known for actively developing information technology-based da'wah, while Indonesia as the largest Muslim country has many digital da'wah initiatives (Mardiana, 2020).

In the next position, *UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta* was recorded as contributing 6 articles in the dataset, followed by a group of institutions that produced 5 articles each, namely *UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar*, *UIN*

Walisongo Semarang, *Ahmad Dahlan University*, and *Telkom University*. This shows that a number of state Islamic universities (UIN) and public universities in Indonesia consistently contribute to digital da'wah studies. Some other institutions such as the *Faculty of Economics & Muamalat, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM)* and *the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Indonesia (UI)* are no less important with 4 articles each. The contribution of institutions from these two countries confirms that the center of digital da'wah research is currently centered in the Indonesia-Malaysia region, in line with the development of Muslim communities and academic attention in the region (Wahid, 2024).

Beyond Southeast Asia, the participation of institutions from other regions remains limited but noteworthy. Utrecht University (Netherlands) represents European engagement with the topic, likely reflecting diaspora Muslim communities and comparative religious studies perspectives. The absence of significant contributions from Middle Eastern institutions—despite the region's central importance in Islamic scholarship—is striking and may reflect different research priorities, publication practices, or language preferences in those contexts. Similarly, minimal representation from African and South Asian institutions, despite their large Muslim populations, suggests untapped potential for research collaboration and knowledge exchange.

This geographical concentration has both advantages and limitations: it enables deep, contextually-rich understanding of digital da'wah in Southeast Asian Muslim-majority societies, but it may limit the generalizability of findings to other contexts where digital da'wah operates under different socio-political, technological, and religious conditions. For instance, digital da'wah in Western diaspora communities faces distinct challenges related to minority status, integration, and identity negotiation that may not be fully captured in Southeast Asian-focused research. Future research would benefit from deliberate efforts to include diverse geographical perspectives through international research networks, comparative studies, and capacity-building initiatives in underrepresented regions.

This opens up opportunities for cross-institutional collaboration in the future, where international research networks can be further strengthened to explore digital da'wah issues more comprehensively. In other words, the dominance of Indonesia and Malaysia in publications needs to be seen as an initial capital to pioneer global cooperation, so that

digital da'wah can be studied in a more universal and comparative context involving various Muslim communities in the world.
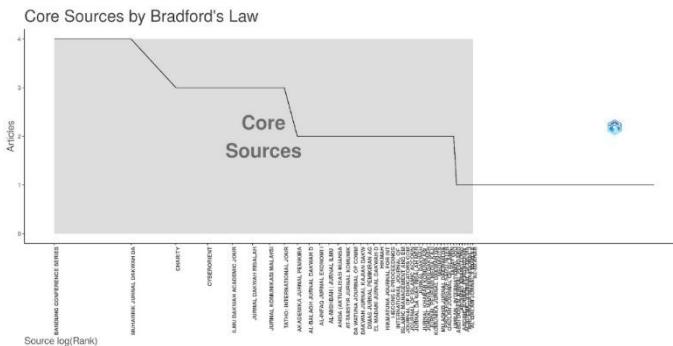
Source: Author's Observation, 2025

Figure 6. Core Sources by Bradford's Law

Table 5. journal clustering with Bradford's law

Zone	Rank	Number of Journals	Number of Publications
Zone 1	1-44	44	91
Zone 2	45-137	93	93
Zone 3	137-227	90	91

Source: Author's Observation, 2025

Furthermore, the analysis of article distribution by source can also be reviewed through the Bradford's Law approach. By categorizing sources based on their productivity, this digital da'wah literature is divided into three Bradford zones. Zone 1 (core) includes about 44 top journals/proceedings that cumulatively publish about a third of the total articles (±91 articles). This means there are dozens of key sources that are highly productive and central to the digital proselytization literature. Zone 2 includes approximately 93 further sources that produce the next third of articles, while Zone 3 consists of the remaining dozens of sources that account for the final third. This Bradford pattern shows that although the topic of digital proselytization has been covered in 227 different sources, the greatest weight lies with the small group of core sources (zone 1) that have a strong focus on the topic (Donthu et al., 2021).

In other words, there are *core journals* where digital proselytization researchers most frequently publish their work, balanced by many other

sources that only contain one or two related articles each. This information is useful for future researchers to identify the main reference sources in the field of digital da'wah, as well as to understand the literature distribution map: this topic has penetrated general and interdisciplinary journals, but the center of gravity of the study is centered on a few specific journals/proceedings that consistently discuss digital da'wah.

Source: Author's Observation, 2025

Figure 7. Wordcloud

In terms of research topics and content, keyword analysis yields insight into the substantive focus of digital da'wah studies. The *word cloud* visualization (Figure 7) displays the frequency of occurrence of keywords in all articles. It can be seen that the terms "digital", "da'wah", "media", and "Islam" dominate with the highest frequency of occurrence. These four main keywords (each appearing hundreds of times) directly indicate the core of the literature discussion: namely the use of digital media in disseminating Islamic da'wah messages (Mardiana, 2020). The dominance of the words "digital" and "media" confirms that information technology platforms are the main means of da'wah in the present era, while the words "da'wah" and "Islam" indicate the scientific domain and the object being studied.

This finding is natural because the literature search is focused on digital da'wah, but the visualization ensures that the terminology is consistently at the center of the discussion. In addition to these core keywords, several other important keywords emerged that are closely

related to the context of today's da'wah platforms and formats, for example: "online", "YouTube", "content", "technology", "Instagram", and "podcast". The presence of these words strengthens the indication that social media and interactive internet technologies are the favorite mediums in contemporary da'wah practices (Laily et al., 2022; Ummah et al., 2020). The words "Instagram" and "YouTube" in particular stand out as examples of popular platforms that are widely discussed - in line with the trend of preachers' increasing use of photo and video sharing media to reach millennial audiences (Ismail et al., 2018; Laily et al., 2022). This shows that research has paid attention to how each of these platforms are utilized: for example, da'wah strategies through visual content on Instagram, da'wah through vlogs or streaming on YouTube, and audio da'wah through podcasts (Ummah et al., 2020).

The prominence of specific platform names in the keyword analysis reveals the platform-centric nature of current digital da'wah research. However, this also suggests potential limitations: as social media platforms evolve rapidly (with some declining and new ones emerging), platform-specific research may have limited longevity. The relative absence of keywords related to emerging technologies—such as "artificial intelligence," "algorithm," "metaverse," "virtual reality," or "blockchain" (beyond the fintech context)—indicates that digital da'wah scholarship has not yet substantially engaged with cutting-edge technological developments that may shape future religious communication. Similarly, keywords related to critical issues such as "misinformation," "polarization," "radicalization," "regulation," and "ethics" appear less frequently than might be expected given their prominence in public discourse about online religious content. This gap between keyword frequency and societal concerns suggests potential areas for future research expansion.

Furthermore, methodological keywords such as "research", "study", and "method" are also quite prominent. The emergence of these terms indicates that the academic community pays attention to scientific approaches in studying digital da'wah - for example by conducting case studies, surveys, content analysis, and so on - so the words "method" and "study" are often mentioned in articles. Meanwhile, the presence of the words "society" and "Muslim" as keywords that often appear emphasizes the social and community dimensions of digital da'wah. Da'wah in digital media is not only about technology and platforms, but it is also strongly related to the online Muslim communities involved, both as objects of

study and actors of da'wah (Wahid, 2024). For example, the term "community" can refer to the study of the response of a particular audience or community to a digital da'wah message, and the word "Muslim" indicates that the identity and participation of the Ummah in the digital space is a concern (Mardiana, 2020). Thus, this word cloud as a whole illustrates that the focus of the research is at the intersection of media technology and Islamic content, and its impact on Muslim communities. This finding is consistent with the global phenomenon where the concept of *digital ummah* has emerged, which is an ummah connected through digital platforms in religious and proselytizing activities (Wahid, 2024). In short, the keyword visualization affirms that digital da'wah is studied as an ecosystem involving digital platforms (Instagram, YouTube, etc.), content delivery strategies, and interaction with the wider Muslim community in cyberspace.
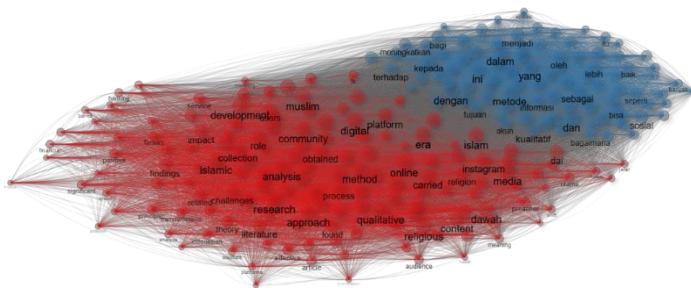
Source: Author's Observation, 2025

Figure 8. Thematic Map

Furthermore, the *thematic map* analysis (Figure 8) provides an explanation of the clustering of digital da'wah research themes and their position in the development of knowledge. This thematic map was created by mapping keywords according to the dimensions of centrality (general relevance) and density (depth of theme development). The results revealed two main clusters of themes depicted in different colors. The first cluster (marked in red) contains themes such as *"Muslim"*, *"digital platform"*, *"Islam"*, *"analysis"*, and *"community"*. This group of keywords reflects the research focus on the development aspect of digital da'wah and its impact on the community. This red theme can be interpreted as a discussion of how digital da'wah shapes the behavior of the Muslim community, how digital platforms are used effectively, and how the analysis of the impact of da'wah is carried out.

The implication is that the red clusters are relatively high centrality basic themes - meaning they are important in the scientific structure of digital da'wah - but their density can vary depending on how deeply each aspect is studied. For example, a study of "community" in digital da'wah might include studies of the formation of online recitation communities, hijra groups on social media, or ustaz fan bases on YouTube, all of which emphasize community engagement and the social impact of digital da'wah (Lestari, 2024). Meanwhile, the second cluster (in blue) groups terms such as *"media"*, *"dakwah"*, *"method"*, "*Instagram*", and *"religion"*. The themes in this blue cluster emphasize the approach and means of digital da'wah itself.

In other words, the blue cluster focuses on how da'wah is carried out in the digital medium: including discussions about media as a channel (e.g. social media, applications), da'wah techniques or methods (content strategy, interaction, engagement), as well as the religious context conveyed. The word "Instagram" included in this cluster reinforces that even specific platforms are the object of study in an effort to understand digital da'wah methodology. When compared, the red cluster is oriented towards content and impact (who is involved and how it is influenced), while the blue cluster is oriented towards media and approach (what is the medium and how). These two main clusters complete our understanding: digital da'wah is examined in terms of its content and community as well as its medium and method. This kind of conceptual mapping not only shows the relationship between keywords, but also helps to understand the position of each theme in the research landscape.

The dominance of the above two clusters indicates that most digital da'wah research pivots on these fundamental themes - a result that is in line with the main focus of today's digital da'wah researchers (Lestari, 2024). Other themes outside the two main clusters tend to be less prominent or integrated into the existing clusters, thus not forming significant separate groups. This finding is in line with the view that current digital da'wah studies concentrate on key issues such as the use of social media, preacher-audience interaction, and its influence on religious practice, while more specific subthemes are internationalized into these general topics.
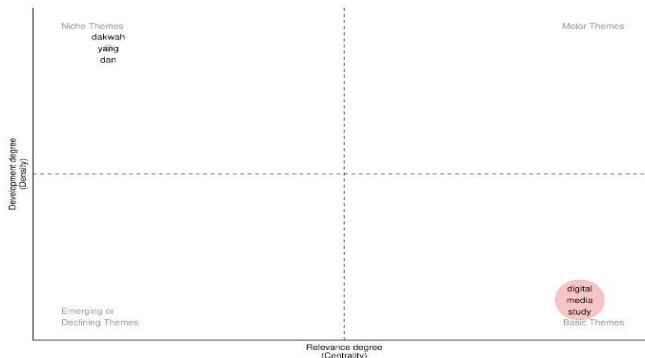
Source: Author's Observation, 2025

Figure 9 Thematic Evolution

Finally, the thematic evolution analysis (Figure 9) provides a longitudinal perspective on the development of digital da'wah topics over time. Based on *thematic evolution* mapping, digital da'wah research themes can be categorized into four quadrants: motor themes (main and most advanced), basic themes (main but not yet deeply developed), niche themes (specific and developing in isolation), and emerging or declining themes (not yet important or starting to be abandoned) (Cobo et al., 2012). The mapping results show that some key terms such as "digital", "media", and "studies" are in the basic theme quadrant (bottom right). This means that the concept of "digital da'wah" in general, the medium, and the studies themselves are the foundation for further research - seen as central to many studies, although their development may still be at the level of broad concepts.

In contrast, the word "proselytization" (itself) along with terms such as "which" and "and" appear in the quadrant of theme niches (top left). Although the presence of conjunctions such as "yang" and "dan" may not have substantive meaning (possibly an artifact of Indonesian text data that has not been fully filtered), the presence of the word "dakwah" in the niche quadrant can be interpreted that the topic of dakwah - in a certain context - is discussed specifically and in depth by certain research groups. This could be referring to highly specialized da'wah subtopics (e.g. da'wah for specific segments or specific methods) that are studied separately from the mainstream.

Interestingly, the map does not clearly identify any themes that fall into the motoric category (top right quadrant) or emerging/declining

themes (bottom left). The absence of themes in the motor quadrant is particularly significant—it suggests that there is no cluster of topics that can be considered both highly developed and highly important in digital da'wah research. In other words, there is no specific "frontier research" that is leading the way as the most advanced flagship theme.

This represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the field. The challenge is that digital da'wah research may be perceived as lacking cutting-edge theoretical or methodological innovation. The opportunity is that there is substantial room for researchers to develop motor themes by deepening existing basic themes or by introducing genuinely novel perspectives. Similarly, there are no specific themes that have emerged as significant novelties or old themes that have been completely abandoned. This situation indicates that the focus of digital da'wah research is still centered on well-established basic themes, and not many new themes have emerged that are completely separate from these main themes.

To identify potential emerging themes that could evolve into motor themes, we conducted a supplementary analysis of recent publications (2022-2024) and found several promising directions: (1) Algorithmic da'wah: examining how social media algorithms shape religious content visibility and consumption; (2) Monetization and professionalization: analyzing the economic dimensions of digital da'wah and the emergence of professional da'i influencers; (3) Regulation and governance: exploring policy responses to problematic online religious content; (4) AI-assisted da'wah: investigating the use of chatbots, automated content generation, and personalization technologies; (5) Cross-platform strategies: studying how preachers coordinate presence across multiple platforms; and (6) Digital da'wah literacy: examining educational initiatives to improve critical engagement with online religious content. These themes are currently nascent but show potential for development into motor themes if researchers invest in systematic, theoretically-grounded investigation. The pandemic period provided a natural experiment that accelerated certain research directions, but post-pandemic scholarship has yet to consolidate these insights into coherent research programs.

In other words, the fundamental aspects of digital da'wah (e.g. use of social media, content strategy, community participation) have become the mainstream of studies (Wahid, 2024), while more innovative or exotic topics have yet to emerge as trends in their own right. Similar findings were revealed by Marwantika (2021), who noted that digital da'wah studies in

Indonesia tend to repeat the focus on the core concepts of da'wah and media, and there is still little exploration towards new themes such as the use of AI in da'wah or virtual reality for example. For scholarly development, this means that the space for deepening and renewal is still very open - both deepening existing basic themes and exploring new themes. The thematic evolution map helps researchers identify research gaps: for example, the absence of the "motor" theme suggests that no field of digital da'wah has been explored in great depth, and the absence of "new themes" suggests the need for breakthroughs into current issues that may not have been widely researched (Donthu et al., 2021).

In the future, enriching the study of digital da'wah with emerging issues (such as da'wah in the metaverse, the use of artificial intelligence for da'wah content, etc.) can push the theme up the motorcycle. Similarly, strengthening international collaboration has the potential to bring new perspectives that encourage the birth of new themes or different approaches. Overall, this analysis of thematic evolution illustrates that digital da'wah studies are still consolidating around key issues, and further transformations are likely as technology and future da'wah needs evolve. This finding provides direction that researchers should start looking at less explored areas so that the scientific treasure of digital da'wah is more comprehensive and contextualized with the times (Marwantika, 2021; Wahid, 2024).

An analysis of the methodological approaches employed in the reviewed literature reveals important patterns that shape the knowledge production in digital da'wah studies. The majority of publications (approximately 68%) utilize qualitative methods, with content analysis being the most prevalent approach (32% of all studies), followed by case studies (21%), and ethnographic or netnographic methods (15%). Quantitative approaches account for roughly 22% of publications, primarily employing surveys and social network analysis. Mixed-methods designs remain relatively uncommon, representing only about 10% of the corpus. This methodological distribution has several implications. The dominance of qualitative content analysis enables rich, contextual understanding of da'wah messages, strategies, and audience responses.

However, it also limits the generalizability of findings and makes systematic comparison across studies challenging. The relative scarcity of experimental or quasi-experimental designs means that causal claims about the effectiveness of different da'wah strategies remain largely unsupported

by rigorous evidence. The limited use of computational methods (such as large-scale text mining, network analysis, or machine learning) represents a missed opportunity given the digital nature of the phenomenon and the availability of large datasets from social media platforms. Future research would benefit from greater methodological diversity, including: longitudinal studies to track changes over time; experimental designs to test intervention effectiveness; computational approaches to analyze large-scale patterns; and mixed-methods designs that combine depth and breadth. Additionally, greater attention to methodological rigor—including transparent reporting of sampling procedures, data collection protocols, and analytical processes—would enhance the credibility and cumulative nature of digital da'wah scholarship.

While this study's dataset is dominated by Southeast Asian scholarship, it is important to contextualize these findings within broader global patterns of digital Islamic communication. Comparative analysis with limited available literature from other regions reveals both commonalities and important differences. In the Middle East, digital da'wah research tends to focus more on institutional religious authority and state-sponsored religious communication, reflecting the different political contexts in which religious discourse operates. Studies from this region often examine how traditional religious establishments (such as Al-Azhar in Egypt or official religious ministries) utilize digital platforms to maintain authority and counter alternative interpretations.

In contrast, Southeast Asian research emphasizes grassroots, individual preachers and the democratization of religious authority. In Western contexts, where Muslims constitute minorities, digital da'wah research focuses more on identity negotiation, community building among diaspora populations, and countering Islamophobia. The platforms and strategies also differ: while Instagram and YouTube dominate Southeast Asian digital da'wah, Western Muslim communities show greater utilization of podcasts and long-form content platforms. In South Asian contexts (based on limited available literature), digital da'wah research often intersects with sectarian dynamics and the role of digital media in intra-Muslim debates. These regional variations suggest that digital da'wah is not a uniform global phenomenon but is shaped by local socio-political contexts, religious landscapes, technological infrastructures, and cultural norms. The Southeast Asian model—characterized by celebrity preachers, youth-oriented content, and platform-hopping strategies—may not be

directly applicable to other contexts. Future research should pursue systematic comparative studies that examine how different contextual factors shape digital da'wah practices and outcomes, enabling both context-specific insights and identification of universal principles.

CONCLUSION

It is undeniable that digital da'wah research in the era of social media makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the utilization of technology in the dissemination of Islamic religious messages. Through bibliometric analysis, this study successfully illustrates research trends, author contributions, and the relevance of key journals involved in the development of digital da'wah themes. The results show that the number of scientific articles discussing digital da'wah has increased significantly since 2009 until it reaches its peak in 2024.

The results of the author collaboration analysis reveal the dominance of researchers from institutions in Indonesia and Malaysia, although international collaboration is still relatively low. In addition, the findings also show the core journals that are the main references in this study, such as the Journal of Da'wah and Social Muharrik and the Bandung Conference Series of Islamic Broadcasting Communication. Digital da'wah is not only a medium for disseminating religious information but also an ecosystem that utilizes social media and digital technology to reach a wider and heterogeneous audience.

This research provides important insights for the development of more innovative and relevant digital da'wah strategies. For digital da'i, the findings suggest prioritizing visual-oriented platforms such as Instagram and TikTok for youth engagement, while utilizing YouTube for in-depth religious content and Facebook for community building among diverse age groups. Islamic educational institutions should integrate digital literacy and social media management into da'wah curricula, establishing research centers focused on digital Islamic communication to bridge theory and practice.

For policymakers, developing ethical guidelines for digital da'wah content, supporting infrastructure for digital Islamic education, and facilitating international research collaboration networks are essential. Effective content strategies include short-form videos addressing contemporary Islamic issues, interactive Q&A sessions, storytelling

approaches connecting Islamic values with daily life, and multilingual content to expand global reach. This analysis also opens up opportunities for further study, particularly in strengthening cross-country collaboration and the exploration of new themes in digital da'wah.

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