



Da'i Credibility and Religious Authority Negotiation in Habib Jindan's Instagram Da'wah

Arief Ajie Pamungkas Emnoor^{1*}, Agus Riyadi² & Awaludin Pimay³

¹²³Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo, Semarang, Indonesia

*ariefadji34@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines the construction of da'i credibility and the negotiation of religious authority in Habib Jindan's digital da'wah practices on Instagram. Grounded in Horland's credibility theory, digital religious authority theory, and the framework of Islamic da'wah elements, this qualitative research employs content analysis of 20 selected posts from the Instagram account @alhabibjindan, which has approximately 1.3 million followers. Data were collected through non-participant observation of content, captions, and audience comments. The analysis focuses on three dimensions of credibility: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. The findings show that Habib Jindan constructs digital credibility through consistent religious messages, transparent identity representation, contextual Islamic explanations, empathetic communication styles, and symbolic religious visualizations. Trustworthiness is reflected in the consistency between messages and practices, expertise appears through the use of Qur'anic and hadith references contextualized to contemporary issues, while attractiveness is built through humanistic language, emotional engagement, and authentic visual presentation. This study also finds that the adaptation of traditional habaib authority into Instagram's platform logic creates a negotiation between religious depth and digital accessibility. Religious authority is influenced not only by sanad and scholarly recognition, but also by digital symbolic capital such as followers and engagement. Theoretically, this research contributes to digital da'wah studies through the concept of da'i credibility construction, while practically offering insights for developing adaptive and ethical da'wah strategies in social media environments.

Keywords: *Da'i credibility; digital da'wah; Habib Jindan; instagram; religious authority.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes to patterns of social interaction in modern society. The presence of the internet and digital media not only influences how people communicate, but also shapes how they think, behave, and

construct meaning in daily life (Mulya, Wardani, & Qotrunnada, 2026). Social media has become a new space for the public to exchange information, express identity, and build social relationships across the boundaries of space and time. This transformation has made digital media an inseparable part of contemporary human life, including in the aspects of religion and spirituality (Mardiana, Prastio, Mubarak, Khoiriah, & Usman, 2025)

These changes in the communication landscape have also influenced how religious teachings are delivered and received (Pulungan & Kahpi, 2025). Preaching practices previously associated with physical spaces such as mosques, taklim assemblies, and religious educational institutions have now expanded into virtual spaces. Social media has introduced more open, interactive, and easily accessible religious communication patterns for various segments of the public (Hayati, Yahya, Zakiah, & Siswanto, 2025). These conditions have prompted the emergence of new forms of preaching adapted to the characteristics of digital media and the needs of an increasingly diverse audience (Famuji, Nurhaidah, Pramula, & Yasin, 2025)

Alongside the massive use of social media in preaching, new challenges have emerged regarding the quality of religious messages and the credibility of their senders (Chanra & Tasruddin, 2025). A dai is no longer judged solely by the depth of religious knowledge he possesses, but also by his ability to convey messages in an engaging, contextual, and responsible manner. Creativity in preaching has become an important element to ensure that religious messages are received well without losing their substantive values. Therefore, the combination of credibility and creativity has become a central concern in contemporary preaching studies (Faishol & Zuhro, 2024)

Social media also plays a role in shaping public perceptions of religious authority. The digital space allows anyone to produce and distribute religious messages, making the boundary between formal and informal authority increasingly fluid (Herman, 2025). This phenomenon demands critical studies on how religious figures build trust and legitimacy amid a fast-moving and competitive information environment. Audience trust has become a key factor in the sustainability and impact of preaching in the digital space (Efriant, 2025)

Studies on preaching in the era of social media are important for understanding the dynamics of religious communication as they continue to develop (Riyadi & Karim, 2023). Research on digital preaching is not

only relevant to the development of preaching knowledge, but also contributes to formulating a model of preaching that is adaptive, ethical, and oriented toward community welfare. Accordingly, this study is expected to provide a conceptual framework for preaching practices that are responsive to the changing times without neglecting the foundational values of Islamic teachings (Yasin & Khotima, 2025)

In the field of preaching studies, the credibility of a preacher is one of the fundamental elements that determines the effectiveness of a message in the communication process between the preacher and the *mad'u*. The elements of preaching which include the preacher (subject of da'wah), *mad'u* (object of da'wah), *maddab* (material/message), *wasilah* (media), *thariqah* (method), and *atsar* (effect) interact dynamically in shaping the success of da'wah. Among all these elements, the credibility of the preacher occupies a central position because it directly influences how messages are received, understood, and responded to by the *mad'u* (Arifin, 2015; Muhyiddin, 2010). In other words, the success of preaching is not only determined by the content of the message, but also by the extent to which the preacher is perceived as capable, trustworthy, and compelling to the audience. In this context, the credibility of a preacher is understood as the audience's perception of the personal and professional qualities of the preacher that directly influence the effectiveness of message delivery in da'wah communication, both in face-to-face settings and through digital media (Mardiana et al., 2025).

To understand the concept of credibility more deeply, a theoretical framework explaining its constituent elements is necessary. Hovland, (1959) explained that the credibility of a communicator consists of three main dimensions: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. Trustworthiness refers to the audience's perception of the honesty, integrity, and reliability of the message source. Expertise relates to the competence, knowledge, and skills of the communicator in conveying material. Meanwhile, attractiveness refers to the personal appeal of the communicator both physical and psychological which is capable of building emotional closeness with the audience. In the context of Islamic preaching, these three dimensions can be operationalized more specifically. Trustworthiness is reflected in the consistency between the preacher's speech and behavior, as well as his steadfastness to Islamic values. Expertise is evident in the depth of scholarly references, the accuracy of interpretation, and the relevance of the preaching message to social

realities. As for attractiveness, it can be seen through communication style, visual appearance, and the preacher's ability to build an emotional connection with the congregation.

This theoretical explanation is in line with the view of Rodiyah (2021), who emphasized that the credibility of a preacher is not only determined by rhetorical ability, but also by the alignment between speech and action, depth of religious understanding, and morals reflected in daily life. Thus, a preacher's credibility is a combination of personal and professional qualities that simultaneously build the audience's trust in the preaching message being delivered.

In Islamic tradition, credibility and religious authority are not built instantly, but rather through various forms of social and scholarly legitimacy. Such authority can be derived from *nasab* (lineage), a chain of scholarly knowledge (*sanad*), diplomas from recognized teachers, and recognition from scholarly networks. In the context of the *habaib* descendants of the Prophet Muhammad through the Ba'alawi Hadramaut lineage this authority carries very strong symbolic dimensions because it combines genealogical legitimacy and scholarly legitimacy (Eickelman, 2011). From Weber & Cohn (2006) perspective, this form of authority is a combination of traditional authority based on cultural inheritance and charismatic authority based on personal appeal., this form of authority is a combination of traditional authority based on cultural inheritance and charismatic authority based on personal appeal.

However, the development of digital media presents new challenges to these traditional patterns of religious authority. Digital platforms operate according to communication logics different from those of conventional preaching spaces. Bunt (2009), in cyber-Islamic studies, explained that the internet has disrupted traditional religious authority hierarchies by opening up space for new actors including those without formal scholarly backgrounds to produce and distribute religious discourse. In line with this, (Bourdieu, 1993) explains the concept of symbolic capital, noting that traditional forms of legitimacy such as lineage and *sanad* must be converted into new forms of digital capital, such as number of followers, audience engagement rate, and content virality. However, this conversion process does not happen automatically, but rather requires adaptive strategies suited to the characteristics of digital media.

These changes in the preaching landscape show that the success of digital preaching is not only determined by scholarly authority, but also by

the ability to understand the behavior of social media audiences. Therefore, in order to understand audience responses to digital preaching, this study employs the Uses and Gratifications perspective of Stark & Schneiders (2026). This theory emphasizes that audiences are active agents who selectively use media to fulfill certain needs. In the context of digital preaching, audiences access religious content on Instagram to obtain various forms of gratification, such as religious information needs, the reinforcement of religious identity, social integration through a sense of connectedness with a community, and entertainment needs fulfilled through engaging content. Based on this framework, the analysis of audience comment patterns in this study is directed at understanding the dominant forms of gratification fulfilled by Habib Jindan's preaching content.

Building on the synthesis of these theories, this study develops an analytical framework for the construction of da'i credibility consisting of three operational dimensions. First, the dimension of trustworthiness in the digital context, which includes message consistency, alignment of content with Islamic values, transparency of identity, and authenticity of the preacher's presentation. Second, the dimension of expertise constructed digitally through the use of scholarly references, depth of elaboration on religious themes, the ability to contextualize Islamic teachings, and the integration of substantive da'wah maddah. Third, the dimension of attractiveness mediated by the platform, which includes empathic communication style, symbolic visualization, utilization of Instagram features, and the ability to build emotional engagement. With this framework, this study can systematically analyze how Hovland's credibility dimensions are concretely manifested in digital preaching practices.

This analytical framework is important because studies on digital preaching on social media have already been conducted with diverse focuses and approaches. Research by Mulya et al. (2026), for example, emphasizes aspects of message reception and the art of Islamic speaking in enhancing preaching effectiveness among teenagers. Their findings show that the success of preaching is greatly influenced by persuasive and emotional communication styles. Meanwhile, Mardiana et al. (2025) highlighted dimensions of preacher credibility based on Hovland's and Al-Bayuni's theories, although their study remains conceptual in nature through a literature review. Research by Pulungan & Kahpi (2025) discusses religious moderation on Instagram with a focus on preachers' da'wah

strategies in general, without delving deeper into aspects of personal branding and individual creativity.

Furthermore, research by Abu Bakar et al (2025) examined the phenomenon of Muslim influencers through a transformational approach to Islamic economics. That research found that scholarly authority is reconstructed through affective communication in digital spaces. Faishol & Zuhro (2024) discuss the da'wah strategy of Ustadzah Halimah Alaydrus on Instagram from a communication strategy perspective. From these various studies, it is evident that digital preaching research still predominantly highlights communication strategies, credibility in a conceptual sense, and message reception in general terms. Meanwhile, analysis of how the traditional authority of *habaib* is negotiated within the logic of digital platforms has not yet been examined specifically and in depth. For this reason, this study attempts to fill that gap through a case study of Habib Jindan's preaching on Instagram.

Based on the foregoing background, this study aims to analyze in depth the construction of preacher credibility in Habib Jindan's digital preaching practices on Instagram through a qualitative approach using content analysis methods. This study is specifically directed at identifying how the dimensions of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness are built through patterns of message delivery, communicative language style, symbolic religious visualization, and digital communication strategies on the @alhabibjindan account. In addition, this study also aims to understand how this credibility is constructed through the adaptation of the traditional authority of the *habaib* to the logic of the Instagram platform, so as to build emotional closeness, audience trust, virtual congregation social integration, and the relevance of Islamic messages to the social realities of contemporary society, particularly among the younger generation and urban communities.

This purpose is relevant given that social media has now become the primary arena for the formation of religious opinions, religious identities, and the authority of preachers in the digital society era. Therefore, the urgency of this study lies in the academic and practical need to understand the dynamics of Islamic preaching in digital spaces (Riyadi & Karim, n.d.). Without adequate understanding, digital preaching risks becoming oriented toward popularity alone, without depth of religious message. Thus, this study is expected to become a scientific contribution to the development of contemporary preaching studies, while also serving as a practical

reference for preachers and preaching institutions in designing creative, ethical, and sustainable preaching strategies on social media, especially Instagram.

In line with this urgency, this study also offers an element of novelty in digital preaching studies. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on preacher credibility as an integrative concept that connects preaching creativity, scholarly competence, and adaptation to digital media through a case study of Habib Jindan on Instagram. Unlike previous studies that focused more on aspects of credibility, strategy, or audience reception in a general and partial manner, this study offers a new perspective through systematic analysis of preaching content using content analysis methods to reveal how credibility is built and represented in digital preaching practice. Thus, this study not only enriches the theoretical treasury of digital preaching, but also offers a new analytical model in the study of social media-based Islamic preaching communication.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with content analysis methods. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand the meanings, patterns, and mechanisms of the construction of preacher credibility in the context of digital preaching, rather than merely measuring the frequency of occurrence of certain elements. The content analysis method used refers to the framework of Krippendorff (2004), who emphasized the importance of reliability, validity, and reproducibility of analysis.

In its implementation, the main data source of this study is the Instagram account @alhabibjindan, which has approximately 2,233 uploads and 1.3 million followers. Sample selection was carried out purposively by selecting 20 posts that represent various content categories, namely: (1) thematic preaching or short lectures, (2) normative preaching about morals and ahlul bait, (3) social da'wah responding to contemporary issues, (4) information on activities and congregation mobilization, and (5) contextual preaching related to socio-political issues. The selection of these 20 posts was based on the principle of theoretical saturation, whereby the main categories no longer produce significantly new findings.

Data collection was carried out through non-participant observation of the content, captions, and comment sections of each analyzed post. The data collected covers account identity and profile, content type and

category, themes as well as the maddah of da'wah, language style and tariqah of delivery, visual symbols and Instagram features used, and audience comment patterns as a reflection of the *atsar* of preaching.

The data collected were then analyzed using a codebook developed based on the three dimensions of Hovland's credibility. The trustworthiness dimension is analyzed through narrative consistency, the alignment of content with Islamic values, and the transparency of the preacher's identity. The expertise dimension is analyzed through the depth of scholarly references, the accuracy of religious substance, and the ability to contextualize messages. Meanwhile, the attractiveness dimension is analyzed through communication style, visual quality, and the level of audience emotional engagement. The analytical techniques include data reduction, thematic categorization, and the drawing of conclusions inductively.

In order for the analysis results to have adequate validity, this study firmly differentiates between constructed credibility and perceived credibility. The study focuses more on the analysis of constructed credibility that is, credibility built through preaching content whereas audience comments are used as indicative data regarding perceived credibility, without claiming that these comments represent the overall perceptions of the account's followers. This limitation is recognized as an epistemological boundary of the research that can be further developed through surveys or in-depth interviews with audiences.

As a concluding note on method, this study also integrates the preaching knowledge perspective into the overall analysis. The study's findings are not only read through the lens of Western communication theory, such as Hovland's credibility theory and Uses and Gratifications, but are also analyzed using the framework of preaching elements, which includes the preacher as subject, *mad'u* as audience, *maddah* as message material, Instagram as a medium (*wasilah*), *thariqah* as the method of communication, and *atsar* as the effect reflected in audience responses to the preaching. With this integrative approach, this study is expected to present a more comprehensive understanding of the construction of preacher credibility in contemporary digital preaching practice.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Profile and Construction Digital Identity

The general profile of the Instagram account @alhabibjindan (Table 1) provides an initial description of Habib Jindan's position in the digital preaching landscape. The account identity, which uses the preacher's full name along with the title "Habib", indicates a personal branding strategy that integrates traditional habaib identity into the digital platform. Unlike regular influencer accounts that prioritize personal content, this account consistently positions itself as an institutional preaching medium connected with the Al-Fachriyah institution.

Table 1.

General Profile of the Instagram Account @alhabibjindan

No	Profile Aspects	Information	Relevance	Credibility
1	Account Name	@alhabibjindan	Identity	transparency (trustworthiness)
2	Number of Posts	2,233 uploads	Consistency of	preaching (trustworthiness)
3	Number of Followers	±1.3 million followers	Social	recognition (attractiveness)
4	Number of Followers	10 accounts	Preaching vs.	entertainment orientation
5	Content Type	Preaching videos, posters, assembly documentation	Maddah	variations (expertise)
6	Dominant Hashtags	#alhabibjindan, #habibjindan, #alfachriyah	Institutional	identity (trustworthiness)

Source: Author's Observation, 2026

The number of uploads reaching 2,233 posts reflects the consistency and high intensity of digital preaching. This consistency is a manifestation of the trustworthiness dimension: a preacher who is present regularly builds the perception that he is a reliable and committed figure. However, it should be noted that the number of followers (1.3 million) cannot automatically be interpreted as an indicator of spiritual belief. That number is an indicator of platform popularity, influenced by many factors including content distribution algorithms, network effects, and demographic factors. The distinction between digital popularity and genuine religious legitimacy

is an important matter to consider in this analysis.

The pattern of following only 10 accounts, with a focus on producing preaching content, shows a clear orientation as a preaching medium rather than as an entertainment consumption account. This pattern reflects a deliberate marketing strategy: Instagram is positioned not as a personal social space, but rather as a digital platform that facilitates the directed flow of messages from the preacher to the audience.

Trustworthiness Dimensions: Message Consistency and Identity Integrity

The trustworthiness dimension in Habib Jindan's content is manifested through a number of consistently identified indicators. First, thematic consistency: all content revolves around core themes of worship (especially prayer), morals, love for the Messenger of Allah and the people of his household, the unity of the Muslim community, and social concern. No inconsistency was found between the moral messages conveyed and the choice of published content. This consistency builds the perception that the preacher has a clear preaching direction that is not swayed by viral culture trends.

Second, transparency of identity: the explicit use of the title "Habib" in the account name, the visualization of traditional habaib attire in every video, and a clear affiliation with the Al-Fachriyah institution together build transparency regarding the preacher's background and authority. Unlike a number of preaching accounts that obscure institutional identity, the @alhabibjindan account openly confirms from which tradition and authority it speaks (Septianto, Saidun, & Amin, 2024). This transparency is an important component of trustworthiness, as the audience clearly knows the framework and tradition from which the preaching message originates (Rofiq & Sholihah, 2024; Faturohmi, 2022).

Third, the harmony between visible messages and practices in the posts: preaching about Ahlul Bait is accompanied by visualizations of assembly gatherings; preaching about the unity of the community is accompanied by documentation of real social activities. This alignment provides evidence that the preaching is not merely discourse, but is integrated with actual religious practice.

Dimensions of Expertise: The Construction of Scientific Authority in Digital Space

The dimension of expertise is the most interesting and simultaneously the most complex point of analysis here, because this is where the tension between traditional authority and the logic of the platform is most visible. In the context of the habaib, expertise is traditionally demonstrated through a formal path: acquiring knowledge from teachers with an established sanad, obtaining a scholarly diploma, and being recognized by a network of scholars (Rijal, 2017 ; Safrudin et al., 2025). On the Instagram platform, the question becomes: how is this expertise constructed and communicated?

From the content analysis, it was found that Habib Jindan employs several strategies for constructing expertise digitally. First, substantive thematic elaboration: lecture content does not merely convey generic moral messages, but links them to explicit references from the Quran, hadith, and scholarly views, albeit in a concise format suited to the Instagram context. Second, contextualization of teachings: the ability to connect religious texts with contemporary social issues (Palestine, socio-political dynamics, urban realities) demonstrates not merely textual memorization, but an understanding of the maqasid of preaching in the current context (Long et al., 2025; Destriafiani et al., 2025). Third, the position as a reference: patterns of audience comments in which questions about religious matters are submitted to Habib Jindan (asking for fatwas, requesting views on certain issues) show that the audience perceives the preacher as an authoritative source worthy of consultation.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to acknowledge an inherent tension: Instagram's format, which demands short and easily consumed content, structurally limits the depth of scholarly elaboration. A complex and layered lecture must be compressed into a short clip that may simplify important jurisprudential or theological nuances. This is an unavoidable trade-off in the adaptation of preaching to platform logic, and it is an area that needs to be continually critiqued in digital preaching studies.

Attractiveness Dimensions: Communication Style and Symbolic Visualization

The dimension of attractiveness in Habib Jindan's preaching operates through two main channels: communicative language style and symbolic religious visualization. Both do not stand apart, but are integrated in every piece of content.

Habib Jindan's language style is reflective, dialogical, and humanistic.

The language used is communicative and persuasive, with accessible word choices for audiences from various backgrounds. This approach makes the audience feel embraced rather than patronized an appropriate strategy given Hawari et al (2024) finding that Generation Z tends to be more receptive to humanistic and non-hierarchically imposing preaching. Although he possesses legitimate religious standing as a *habib*, the language style used does not highlight scholarly superiority or social status. This can be interpreted as a strategic adaptation to the logic of the Instagram platform, which prioritizes closeness and personal connection over hierarchical distance between the communicator and the audience.

In terms of visualization, the use of religious symbols the typical *habaib* attire, turban, calm facial expression, and assembly setting functions as a marker of religious authority operating nonverbally. Semiotic communication theory Barthes (1972) shows that consistent visual symbols reinforcing verbal messages strengthen the understanding and legitimacy of the communicator. The visual simplicity displayed, without excessive aesthetic exploitation, actually strengthens the impression of authenticity and sincerity hallmarks of Islamic preaching. In contrast to some *da'wah* influencers who rely on highly aesthetic content production, *Habib Jindan* chooses a simplicity that semiotically communicates authenticity.

Table 2.

Classification of Islamic Preaching Content and Its Relevance to Hovland's Credibility Dimension

No	Content Type (Maddah)	Example Post	Credibility Dimension	Function of Da'wah
1	Thematic Preaching	Position of prayer	Expertise	Normative hymn
2	Normative Da'wah	Morals, Ahlul Bait	Trustworthiness	Religious identity
3	Social Da'wah	Palestine, the issue of the people	Attractiveness	Social awareness
4	Activity Information	Assembly agenda, maulid	Trustworthiness	Mobilization means
5	Contextual Preaching	Socio-political issues	Expertise & Attractiveness	Contextualization

Source: Author's Observation, 2026

Audience Interaction Patterns: Gratification and Atsar Dakwah

Analysis of audience comment patterns from a Uses and Gratifications perspective reveals several dominant categories of gratification fulfilled by Habib Jindan's content. First, identity gratification: comments expressing affection and closeness with Habib Jindan ("I miss Habib", "May Allah grant Habib a long life") show that audiences use this content to affirm and strengthen their religious identity as part of the habaib preaching community. Second, social integration gratification: the dominance of comments in the form of prayers, blessings, and expressions of collective emotion signifies that the comment section functions as a participatory virtual religious community space where members feel connected to one another through a shared preaching reference. Third, information gratification: questions about assembly schedules, religious matters, and study invitations indicate an audience that is actively seeking knowledge and practical information from this account.

Table 3.

Audience Interaction Patterns: Gratification and Atsar Dakwah

No	Response Form (Atsar)	Example Comments	Gratification (U&G)	Credibility Dimension
1	Prayers and Blessings	"O, Allah exalts..."	Social integration	Trustworthiness
2	Expression of Emotions	Heart crying emoji,	Religious identity	Attractiveness
3	Religious questions	Ask for study schedule	Information	Expertise
4	Social expectations	"Hopefully the conflict will subside"	Social integration	Trustworthiness
5	Back information	Assembly agenda	Information	Interactivity

Source: Author's Observation, 2026

The analysis of atsar patterns in this preaching must be accompanied by an important epistemological note: comments appearing in the comment section do not represent the overall perceptions of 1.3 million followers. Audiences who do not comment (the silent majority) may hold

different perceptions. Furthermore, the Instagram platform itself filters and curates comments through its own mechanisms, so visible comments are not a neutral reflection of all audience responses. This limitation confirms that this analysis measures constructed credibility and indications of perceived credibility, rather than comprehensive audience perception.

The Construction of Habib's Traditional Authority in Digital Space: Adaptation and Tension

Integrating (Weber & Cohn, 2006), (Power, 1999), and (Bunt, 2009) frameworks, it is possible to identify the mechanisms through which Habib's authority is reconstructed in digital space, through three processes: adaptation, negotiation, and limitation.

The process of adaptation is evident in how Habib Jindan converts traditional capital into digital formats. Lineage and institutional affiliation (Al-Fachriyah) are transformed into brand identity elements communicated through the account name, hashtags, and visual symbols. The sanad of knowledge from the Islamic boarding school tradition is communicated through the depth of lecture content and the accuracy of religious references. Charismatic authority, which typically functions in direct gatherings, is adapted through a personal and empathetic communication style that creates a sense of closeness in digital format.

The process of negotiation is evident in the tension not always fully resolved between scholarly depth and the demands of platform format. Instagram as an algorithm-driven platform structurally incentivizes content that is quickly consumable, emotionally resonant, and visually appealing, rather than content dense with fihiyyah argumentation. This means that adaptation to the Instagram platform is not fully neutral epistemologically: the format selected indirectly shapes the type of religious knowledge that can be communicated effectively.

Limitations appear in aspects that are difficult to construct digitally: legitimacy derived from direct face-to-face encounters (blessings through physical presence, verified lineage through scholarly networks) cannot be fully digitized. This creates a gap between digitally constructed authority and authority recognized within the Islamic scholarly tradition. This phenomenon is part of broader dynamics in the "mediatization of religion" Hjarvard (2013): when religion operates through digital media, the logic of the media gradually reshapes the logic of religion itself.

Challenges and Limitations of the Digital Da'wah Model

Analytical objectivity demands that, beyond the strengths of the model, Habib Jindan's digital preaching should also be analyzed from a critical perspective. At least three aspects warrant attention.

First, the reduction of teaching complexity: Instagram's format, which demands short content, potentially oversimplifies religious issues that are substantive and require in-depth discussion. Controversial *fihiyyah* issues or complex theological problems are difficult to address fairly in a short video clip format. This is not a criticism directed at Habib Jindan personally, but rather a reflection of the structural limitations of the medium being used.

Second, the potential for unintentional sectarianism: content that emphasizes the identity of *Ahlul Bait* and *habaib* tradition can unintentionally reinforce sectarian identity boundaries in Indonesian Islam, even though the explicit message is one of community unity. In the jurisprudence of preaching, one of the main principles is to consider the *atsar* of preaching comprehensively, including unintended effects.

Third, the conflation of popularity and quality: there is a prevailing trend of using popularity metrics (followers, likes, engagement) as a proxy for preaching effectiveness. However, the effectiveness of preaching in the substantive sense behavioral change, deepening of religious understanding, increase in righteous deeds cannot be measured through engagement metrics alone. This is one of the fundamental epistemological problems in digital preaching studies that must continue to be addressed.

The limitations of this study need to be explicitly acknowledged. This study only measures constructed credibility based on content analysis, while perceived credibility the actual credibility experienced by the *mad'u* requires data directly from the audience. Methodological triangulation through interviews or surveys with a sample audience would significantly strengthen the validity of findings regarding preaching effectiveness.

Table 4.

Main Da'wah Themes and Their Implications in the Framework of Da'wah Science

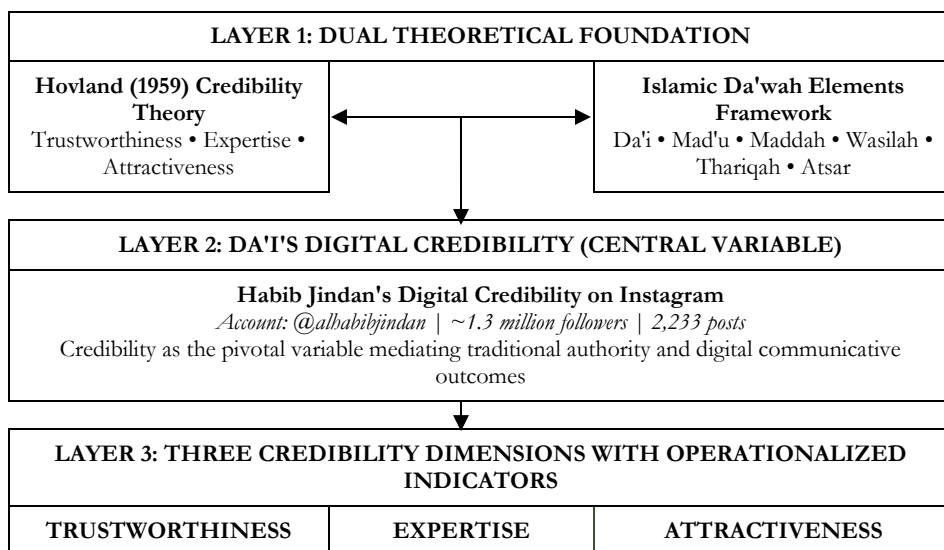
No	Theme of Da'wah (Maddah)	Message Focus	Implications of Fiqh Da'wah
1	Prayer	The foundation of worship	Maqasid: maintenance of religion (hifzh al-din)

2	Ahlul Bait	Moral role model	Strengthening traditional identity, potential for exclusivism
3	Morals	Social ethics	Maqasid: maintenance of soul and mind
4	Unity of the People	Social harmony	Da'wah siyasah: Muslim community cohesion
5	Global Issues	Human solidarity	Social da'wah: global awareness of the community

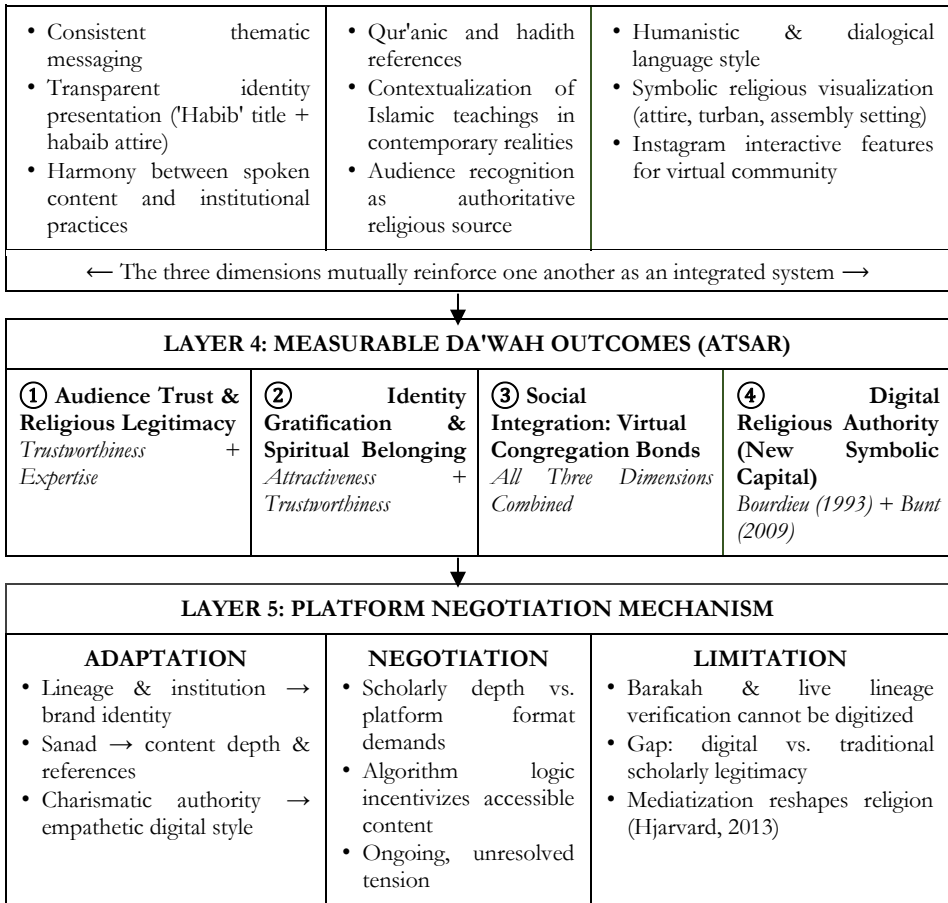
Source: Author's Observation, 2026

Da'i Credibility Construction and Implications for Da'wah Studies

The following scheme (Figure 1) presents a comprehensive visual framework of da'i credibility construction as empirically identified in Habib Jindan's digital da'wah practice on Instagram. The scheme integrates Hovland (1959) three-dimensional credibility theory with the Islamic da'wah elements framework, and situates the analysis within the broader theoretical context of digital religious authority Bunt (2009) and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1993; Khotimah et al., 2024). Reading the scheme from top to bottom reveals the layered architecture of credibility: from its theoretical foundations, through the central construction mechanism, down to the measurable da'wah outcomes and the underlying platform negotiation dynamics.



Da'i Credibility and Religious Authority Negotiation in Habib Jindan's Instagram Da'wah



Source: Author's Observation, 2026

Figure 1. Scheme of Da'i Credibility Construction: A Case Study of Habib Jindan's Da'wah on Instagram

The scheme in Figure 1 is organized into five hierarchical layers that together constitute the analytical architecture of this study. The first layer identifies the dual theoretical foundation: Hovland, (1959) credibility theory on the left, providing the three core dimensions of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness; and the Islamic da'wah elements framework on the right, encompassing da'i, mad'u, maddah, wasilah, thariqah, and atsar. These two frameworks are not treated as competing paradigms but as complementary lenses whose integration produces a richer and more contextually grounded analytical model.

The second layer places the da'i's digital credibility at the center of the scheme. This central position reflects the theoretical claim that credibility functions as the pivotal variable mediating between the da'i's structural position as a habib with traditional authority and the communicative outcomes produced in the digital environment. The contextual indicators accompanying this layer the @alhabibjindan account identity, approximately 1.3 million followers, and 2,233 published posts serve as empirical anchors demonstrating that the credibility under analysis is actively enacted at scale in a real digital public sphere.

The third layer unpacks the three credibility dimensions with their operationalized indicators. Trustworthiness is operationalized through three observable indicators: consistent thematic messaging across all content categories, transparent identity presentation through the use of the "Habib" title and habaib attire, and the visible harmony between the preacher's spoken content and his documented institutional practices. Expertise is constructed through substantive Qur'anic and hadith references, the contextualization of classical Islamic teachings within contemporary social realities, and the audience's recognition of the da'i as an authoritative religious source. Attractiveness is realized through a humanistic and dialogical language style, deliberate symbolic religious visualization (attire, turban, assembly setting), and the strategic use of Instagram's interactive features to foster a participatory virtual community. The bidirectional relationships connecting these three dimensions indicate that they do not operate in isolation but mutually reinforce one another, functioning as an integrated system rather than three discrete variables (Khalifaoui, Burgués, Duque, & Munté, 2021).

The fourth layer maps the convergence of the three dimensions onto four measurable da'wah outcomes (atsar). First, the convergence of trustworthiness and expertise produces audience trust and religious legitimacy. Second, attractiveness combined with trustworthiness generates identity gratification and a sense of spiritual belonging, fulfilling the emotional and affiliative needs of the audience as identified through the Uses and Gratifications framework (Rabbani et al., 2024; Stark & Schneiders, 2026). Third, the integration of all three dimensions fosters social integration through the formation of virtual congregation bonds, transforming passive followers into an active participatory religious community. Fourth, the dynamic interplay of the three dimensions constructs a form of digital religious authority that adapts the traditional

sanad and genealogical legitimacy of the *habaib* tradition into digital symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1993; Bunt, 2009; Robinson, 2004).

The fifth layer at the base of the scheme identifies the underlying mechanism of platform negotiation through three interacting processes. Adaptation refers to the conversion of traditional capital (lineage, institutional affiliation, scholarly *sanad*) into platform-legible formats such as brand identity, accessible content depth, and empathetic communication style. Negotiation captures the ongoing tension between scholarly depth and platform-driven demands for accessible, emotionally resonant content a tension structurally embedded in algorithm-driven media logic that cannot be fully resolved. Limitation acknowledges the irreducible boundaries of digital authority: elements of traditional legitimacy fundamentally tied to physical co-presence the conferral of *barakah*, verification of lineage through live scholarly networks cannot be fully replicated in the digital medium. This recognition aligns with Hjarvard (2013) mediatization thesis, which proposes that when religion operates through digital media, the logic of the medium inevitably reshapes the logic of religion itself. Taken together, these five layers constitute a theoretically coherent and empirically grounded model of da'i credibility construction that advances digital da'wah studies toward a systematic understanding of the mechanisms through which religious authority is constructed, negotiated, and maintained in digital public space.

Based on the overall analysis, it can be synthesized that the construction of Habib Jindan's credibility on Instagram is a dynamic, multi-layered process that is not entirely free from tension. Credibility is not solely inherited from the traditional authority of the *habaib*, but is actively constructed through specific digital practices: consistent content, scholarly elaboration in an accessible format, empathetic communication style, deliberate symbolic visualization, and management of audience interaction.

Within the framework of preaching elements, these findings can be mapped as follows: the preacher (Habib Jindan) uses the *wasilah* (Instagram) to deliver preaching messages covering themes of worship, morals, social issues, and contextual matters to the *mad'u* (1.3 million diverse followers) through a *thariqah* (approach) that is communicative, empathetic, and dialogic, with an *atsar* (effect) in the form of emotional engagement, identity gratification and social integration, as well as the formation of a participatory religious space.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its articulation of the

mechanism of da'i credibility construction as a process involving the adaptation of traditional authority, negotiation with platform logic, and the development of new and distinctive forms of credibility suited to the context of digital preaching. This mechanism cannot be adequately explained by Hovland's credibility theory alone which was developed for conventional communication contexts but requires integration with digital religious authority theory and an understanding of social media platform logic.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the construction of preacher credibility and the negotiation of religious authority in Habib Jindan's digital preaching practices through the Instagram account @alhabibjindan. Using an integrated analytical framework of Hovland's credibility theory, digital religious authority theory, and the framework of preaching elements, the research finds that Habib Jindan builds his credibility through three interrelated and mutually reinforcing dimensions: trustworthiness through message consistency and identity transparency, expertise through scholarly elaboration and contextualization of teachings, and attractiveness through an empathic communication style and symbolic visualization.

The findings reveal an inherent tension in the process of adapting the traditional authority of the habaib to the logic of the Instagram platform: this adaptation is not a neutral process, but rather involves trade-offs between scholarly depth and format accessibility, between the depth of traditional community bonds and the breadth of the digital audience, and between authority recognized through the sanad and legitimacy constructed through engagement metrics.

The practical implications for the development of preaching knowledge and for practitioners of digital preaching are threefold. First, digital preachers need to consciously select the format and platform most appropriate to their specific preaching objectives not all forms of preaching can be optimized on the same platform. Second, preaching institutions need to develop digital preaching jurisprudence guidelines that take into account the potential limitations and distortions that may arise in adapting to social media formats. Third, further research that includes data from the mad'u (through surveys or interviews) is required to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of digital preaching in its substantive sense.

This study has limitations that must be acknowledged: the analysis is carried out on constructed credibility through content, while perceived credibility from the audience's perspective requires advanced methodological triangulation. It is recommended that further research expand the analysis through a mixed-methods approach combining content analysis with audience interviews or surveys, as well as comparative analysis with other habaib preachers' accounts, in order to understand the variety and consistency of credibility mechanisms in digital preaching.

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