

ISLAMIC DA'WAH ON INSTAGRAM: IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES AMONG ISLAMIC COMMUNICATION AND BROADCASTING STUDENTS AT UIN SUMATERA UTARA

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article History

Published : 31 May 2026

Keywords

Instagram, Informasi Keagamaan, Dakwah Digital, Mahasiswa KPI, UIN Sumatera Utara.

Instagram, Religious Information, Digital Da'wah, KPI Students, UIN Sumatera Utara.



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Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pemanfaatan Instagram sebagai media untuk memenuhi kebutuhan informasi keagamaan di kalangan mahasiswa Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam (KPI) di UIN Sumatera Utara, khususnya terkait praktik akademik, pembelajaran agama, penyebaran dakwah, dan pembentukan sikap kritis terhadap konten Islami di ruang digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologis. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan mahasiswa yang aktif menggunakan Instagram sebagai sumber informasi keagamaan, platform pembelajaran Islam, dan media penyebaran dakwah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa KPI di UIN Sumatera Utara memanfaatkan Instagram sebagai saluran akademik yang terintegrasi dalam proses pembelajaran dan praktik komunikasi Islami. Instagram dimanfaatkan untuk memperoleh informasi keagamaan, pesan dakwah, dan materi terkait akademik. Salah satu saluran dakwah yang menonjol adalah akun @dakwah_tauhid, yang dianggap menarik, kreatif, mudah diakses, dan inspiratif dalam menumbuhkan kedekatan spiritual kepada Allah.

This study aims to explore the utilization of Instagram as a medium for fulfilling religious information needs among Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI) students at UIN Sumatera Utara, specifically concerning academic practices, religious learning, da'wah dissemination, and the formation of critical attitudes toward Islamic content in the digital space. This research employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Data were gathered through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving students who actively use Instagram as a source of religious information, a platform for Islamic learning, and a medium for da'wah outreach. The results indicate that KPI students at UIN Sumatera Utara utilize Instagram as an academic channel integrated into the learning process and Islamic communication practices. Instagram is leveraged to acquire religious information, da'wah messages, and academic-related materials. One of the prominent da'wah channels identified is the @dakwah_tauhid account, perceived as engaging, creative, accessible, and inspirational in fostering spiritual closeness to Allah.

INTRODUCTION

The utilization of Instagram as a medium for *da'wah* (Islamic proselytizing) signifies a transformative shift in how religion is studied and disseminated in the digital era.¹ This transition is inextricably linked to the high enthusiasm for social media in Indonesia, particularly among the youth and university students. The 2026 DataReportal report indicates that Instagram has approximately 108 million users in Indonesia, reaching 49.7% of the adult population aged 18 and above. This widespread adoption has shifted the dissemination of Islamic teachings from conventional spaces to new platforms characterized by speed, visual appeal, and interactivity. Instagram is frequently employed to broadcast Quranic verses, *hadith*, short sermons, and motivational religious messages that are highly accessible to users.² However, *da'wah* on Instagram does not exist in a neutral vacuum; religious messages must adhere to media logic, including account popularity, visual aesthetics, algorithms, and the speed of information consumption. Consequently, Instagram functions not merely as a conduit for Islamic messages but also actively shapes the religious authority, understanding, and practices of its users.³

The application of Instagram as a *da'wah* medium among university students is evident in their daily posts and comments. Instagram transcends its role as a tool for entertainment or personal sharing, becoming a space for seeking religious information, following *da'wah* accounts, engaging with short lectures, and redistributing Islamic messages to other users.⁴ This pattern of usage suggests that students are no longer passive recipients of religious content; they are actively involved in disseminating and dialoguing religious values through features such as comments, stories, reels, and Direct Messages (DM).⁵ Nevertheless, this phenomenon introduces challenges, as *da'wah* activities on Instagram occur within a space intermingled with entertainment, lifestyle content, and potentially unverified information.⁶ Therefore, the use of Instagram for *da'wah*

¹ Eva F Nisa, "Creative and Lucrative Da'wa: The Visual Culture of Instagram amongst Female Muslim Youth in Indonesia," *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 5, no. 1–2 (2018): 68–99, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/22142312-12340085>.

² Cholillah Cholillah and Asa Nabila Arju, "Mediatisasi Agama Dalam Dakwah Halimah Alaydrus Di Media Sosial Instagram," *Al-Qudwah* 2, no. 1 (June 23, 2024): 83, <https://doi.org/10.24014/alqudwah.v2i1.29092>.

³ Frida Mannerfelt and Tone Stangeland Kaufman, "Understanding the Paradox of (Im)Perfection: An Actor-Network Approach to Digitally Mediated Preaching," *Religions* 14, no. 6 (May 26, 2023): 707, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14060707>.

⁴ M. Tahir, "Effective Da'wah in the Era of Society 5.0 : The Perspective of Students in Indonesian State Islamic Higher Education," *Jurnal Dakwah Risalah* 34, no. 1 (July 3, 2023): 52, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jdr.v34i1.23277>.

⁵ Siti Aisyah Artina Febriyani, Juni Wati Sri Rizki, and Nurfitriani M. Siregar, "Media Sosial Instagram Sebagai Sarana Dakwah Di Kalangan Mahasiswa," *Hikmah* 18, no. 1 (June 28, 2024): 147–62, <https://doi.org/10.24952/hik.v18i1.10693>.

⁶ Harry Febrian, "Visualizing Authority: Rise of the Religious Influencers on the Instagram," *Social Media + Society* 10, no. 4 (October 6, 2024): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051241286850>.

necessitates critical scrutiny, particularly in understanding how students select, receive, interpret, and circulate religious messages in the digital sphere.

Students of the Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI) program at UIN Sumatera Utara utilize Instagram not only for entertainment and personal interaction but also as a venue for religious learning and *da'wah* activities. This practice is closely related to their academic background in studying Islamic communication, broadcasting, and the practical application of religious messaging. Through Instagram, KPI students access Islamic content, follow scholarly accounts, and share religious citations in formats more palatable to the digital public. Thus, Instagram serves as a practical laboratory for their academic discipline, where students integrate theoretical knowledge of *da'wah* into their daily communicative practices.⁷

However, this usage also presents issues that warrant careful attention. As students within an Islamic higher education environment in Medan, KPI students are required not only to be proficient in social media but also to possess a robust religious foundation to filter, interpret, and disseminate messages. Without the ability to critically verify information, Instagram usage may facilitate the spread of religious content that is inaccurate, unverified, or visually appealing but substantively weak.

Social media has emerged as a new frontier in shaping the religious understanding of the younger generation. Research by Hidayat, Matsum, and Tarigan found that Muslim Gen-Z in Medan acquire religious knowledge not only from traditional study groups and organizations but also from social media, despite these sources often lacking clear authority.⁸ This finding aligns with Manik, et.al who demonstrated that the *da'wah* of *hadith* on TikTok undergoes mediatization through visual, concise, and communicative packaging, making religious messages more popular but risking the simplification of meaning.⁹ Meanwhile, Pramana identified a positive correlation between the intensity of watching Islamic *da'wah* on social media and students' religious attitudes,¹⁰

⁷ M. Kholili, Ahmad Izudin, and Muhammad Lutfi Hakim, "Islamic Proselytizing in Digital Religion in Indonesia: The Challenges of Broadcasting Regulation," *Cogent Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (December 31, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2357460>.

⁸ Ziaulhaq Hidayat, Hasan Matsum, and Azhari Akmal Tarigan, "Gen-Z Muslims, Social Media and Formless-Spiritual: An Explorative Study of Mosque Youth in Medan City," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama* 17, no. 1 (June 30, 2023): 17–32, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jsa.2023.171-02>.

⁹ Zulfirman Manik et al., "Mediatization of Da'wah Hadith in the Digital Age: An Analysis of @risyad_bay's TikTok Account," *Sufiya Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 2 SE-Articles (August 28, 2024): 87–102, <https://journal.sufiya.org/index.php/sjis/article/view/128>.

¹⁰ Dwi Nurrahmi, Surawan Surawan, and Suci Arifani, "The Relationship Between the Intensity of Watching Islamic Preaching on Social Media and the Religious Attitudes of University Students," *Proceeding International Conference on Religion, Science and Education* 4, no. SE-Articles (April 15, 2025): 1011–20, <https://sunankalijaga.org/prosiding/index.php/icrse/article/view/1535>.

while Virga,et.al showed that Instagram has been used as a space to strengthen identity and disseminate specific religious ideologies.¹¹

The central problem of this study lies in how KPI students at UIN Sumatera Utara utilize Instagram as a dual-purpose medium for learning and *da'wah*, while simultaneously navigating the challenges of maintaining quality, truth, and religious responsibility in the content they consume and share. Consequently, this research aims to explore the practices of Instagram usage among these students, identify the most preferred types of religious content, and analyze the impact on their religious understanding and social roles in disseminating religious values in the digital age. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights into the role of Instagram as a primary source of religious information for Islamic Communication and Broadcasting students at UIN Sumatera Utara.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with an interpretive ethnographic orientation to understand the *Tingkeban* tradition as a meaning-laden cultural practice in the lives of Javanese people in Pangkalan Lunang Village, Kualuh Leidong District, North Labuhanbatu Regency, North Sumatra. The study is directed toward capturing the community's perspective on each ritual stage, the shifts in meaning that accompany it, and the forms of Islam-Javanese acculturation that live within their everyday experience. The research subjects include customary leaders, religious leaders, families who organize *Tingkeban* ceremonies, and community members who know about or are directly involved in the implementation of the tradition. Research data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation focused on the implementation of *Tingkeban* and the involvement of participants in each stage of the ceremony. In-depth interviews were used to explore the informants' understanding of ritual meaning, social function, religious values, and changes in *Tingkeban* practices in the local community. Documentation was used to complement the field data in the form of notes, photographs, and written sources relevant to the object of study. All data were analyzed descriptively and interpretively through data reduction, organization of findings, interpretation of meaning, and drawing conclusions. Through these steps, the study seeks to interpret *Tingkeban* not only as a cultural heritage but also as a socio-religious practice that demonstrates the adaptation of Javanese tradition within an Islamic horizon among the Javanese community in North Sumatra.

¹¹ Rika Lusri Virga et al., "Yuk Ngaji: Digitalization of Generation Z's Religious Activities on Instagram Account," *Al-Balagh : Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 10, no. 1 SE-Articles (April 16, 2025): 149–84, <https://doi.org/10.22515/albalagh.v10i1.11024>.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Utilization of Instagram among Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI) Students at UIN Sumatera Utara

In the current era of rapid digitalization, social media plays a significant role in information dissemination, including religious knowledge. Instagram is an Android-based application that enables users to capture photos, apply digital filters, and share them across various social networking services, including its own platform. Its user-friendly interface has garnered immense popularity across various demographics. Motivation for Instagram usage typically stems from a desire for social surveillance, personal life documentation, self-presentation (aesthetic appeal), and an interest in high-quality creative content published by others.¹²

As a prominent social media platform,¹³ Instagram has been extensively adopted by university students to share information, engage in discussions, and access content tailored to their specific interests and needs. Its multifaceted benefits allow for rapid information exchange and broad interaction, extending even to international audiences. The simplicity of its features further cements its status as a leading social media tool in the contemporary digital landscape.¹⁴

The practical application of Instagram by Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI) students at UIN Sumatera Utara encompasses diverse activities reflecting personal, academic, and social dimensions. A prevalent practice observed is the dissemination of Islamic information. Through the platform, students utilize various features to share Quranic verses, *hadith*, and other religious messages deemed relevant and beneficial for both themselves and their followers.

Furthermore, Instagram serves as a promotional instrument for academic activities within the scope of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting.¹⁵ Students frequently leverage the platform to broaden the reach of campus events, such as seminars, workshops, or public lectures, thereby increasing participation and awareness. Additionally, Instagram functions as an interactive learning tool where students exchange thoughts, perspectives, and discussions regarding classroom materials. This facilitates an exchange of ideas and experiences among peers, fostering a more dynamic and engaging learning environment. Consequently, the use of Instagram by KPI students

¹² Febrian, "Visualizing Authority: Rise of the Religious Influencers on the Instagram."

¹³ Andy Hadiyanto, Kinkin Yuliaty Subarsa Putri, and Luthfi Fazli, "Religious Moderation in Instagram: An Islamic Interpretation Perspective," *Heliyon* 11, no. 4 (February 2025): e42816, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2025.e42816>.

¹⁴ Farah Hasan, "Muslim Instagram: Eternal Youthfulness and Cultivating Deen," *Religions* 13, no. 7 (July 15, 2022): 658, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13070658>.

¹⁵ Göran Larsson and Erika Willander, "Muslims and Social Media: A Scoping Review," *Information, Communication & Society* 28, no. 11 (August 18, 2025): 1908–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2024.2379835>.

at UIN Sumatera Utara reflects a productive integration of social media to support self-development, academic engagement, and social involvement within the university setting.¹⁶

Based on qualitative data from KPI students, the platform is utilized for various academic purposes. Students frequently share Quranic citations or *hadith* relevant to their current course topics while promoting faculty-led academic events. For these students, Instagram is instrumental in deepening their understanding of Islam. By following accounts belonging to prominent scholars (*ulama*) and engaging in religious content, students participate in cross-subject discussions and intellectual exchanges via comments or Direct Messages (DM). Instagram plays a significant role in expanding social networks and building communities among peers, both within and outside the campus, who share similar interests and backgrounds.¹⁷

The usage patterns among KPI students indicate that social media has shifted from a mere space for personal expression into an arena for the construction of knowledge, identity, and socio-religious relations. The activities of sharing religious texts, following *da'wah* content, and promoting academic discourse highlight an expansion of the learning environment from formal classrooms to digital spaces. In this context, Instagram acts not only as a tool for information dissemination but also as a medium through which students process their academic and religious experiences into communication practices that are more open, interactive, and accessible to their community.¹⁸

However, the utilization of Instagram as an academic and religious space necessitates critical scrutiny. While the ease of access and speed of distribution offer opportunities to expand *da'wah* and social networks, they simultaneously risk the simplification of messages, weak source verification, and the tendency to treat religion merely as visually appealing content. Therefore, KPI students must approach Instagram not just as a platform for visibility and sharing, but as a communication space that demands intellectual responsibility, ethical sensitivity, and depth of understanding. This ensures that their digital media practices hold genuine academic, social, and spiritual value.¹⁹

¹⁶ Interviewed, "Student of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting, UIN North Sumatra," 2026.

¹⁷ Interviewed.

¹⁸ Muhammad Maga Sule and Yahaya Sulaiman, "Enhancing Da'wah and Spread of Knowledge Via Social Media Platforms," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 9, no. 1 (January 30, 2021): 145–60, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v9i1.549>.

¹⁹ M. Fadhli and Nashrillah Nashrillah, "The Influence of Da'wah Messages on the Ustadz Adi Hidayat Official YouTube Account on Students' Religious Behavior," *Syar: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* 5, no. 1 (June 27, 2025): 91–102, <https://doi.org/10.54150/syar.v5i1.637>.

Instagram as a Medium for Student Da'wah

Instagram is utilized across various demographics and professions, particularly by digital da'wah activists, due to the burgeoning number of social media users seeking religious materials and information. Numerous preachers (ustadz) leverage Instagram to disseminate Islamic teachings by conveying ethical and constructive advice. The selection of Instagram as a preferred medium has yielded positive impacts by reaching diverse audiences, especially students of the Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI) program at UIN Sumatera Utara. Abdurrauf Karib, a student informant, stated:

“Instagram has become a significant source of religious information for me. On a daily basis, I access various types of religious content, such as Quranic citations, short lectures, and religious advice from various figures I follow. This platform facilitates a constant connection with Islamic teachings despite the rigors of campus life. Furthermore, Instagram has broadened my religious horizons, providing access to various Quranic exegeses (tafsir), religious discussions, and inspirational content that enhances my understanding of the faith. I also feel connected to a wider religious community through interactions with other users and by following trusted religious accounts”.²⁰

Furthermore, the informant detailed specific Instagram accounts that serve as primary sources of Islamic information:

“I frequently utilize Instagram to fulfill my religious information needs. One of the accounts I regularly visit is @dakwah_tauhid. This account presents diverse Islamic content, ranging from procedures for seeking forgiveness (*penghapusan dosa*) to guidelines on selecting a good leader, which is particularly relevant during the current election period. These contents provide valuable insights into Islamic teachings and offer practical guidance for daily life. For instance, content regarding leadership selection is highly pertinent to the election season, helping me feel better prepared to make informed decisions. Instagram plays a pivotal role in disseminating religious information, making it easily accessible to a broad audience. It does not merely provide deep religious understanding but also encourages reflection and the application of these teachings in daily practice, thereby contributing positively to the formation of my attitudes and values as a Muslim”.²¹

²⁰ Aulia Nur and Nashrillah MG, “Strategi Dakwah Di Era Digital (Studi Kasus Pada Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Sumatera Utara Medan),” *Ranah Research : Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* 6, no. 4 (June 5, 2024): 751–57, <https://doi.org/10.38035/rj.v6i4.872>.

²¹ Interviewed, “Student of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting, UIN North Sumatra.”

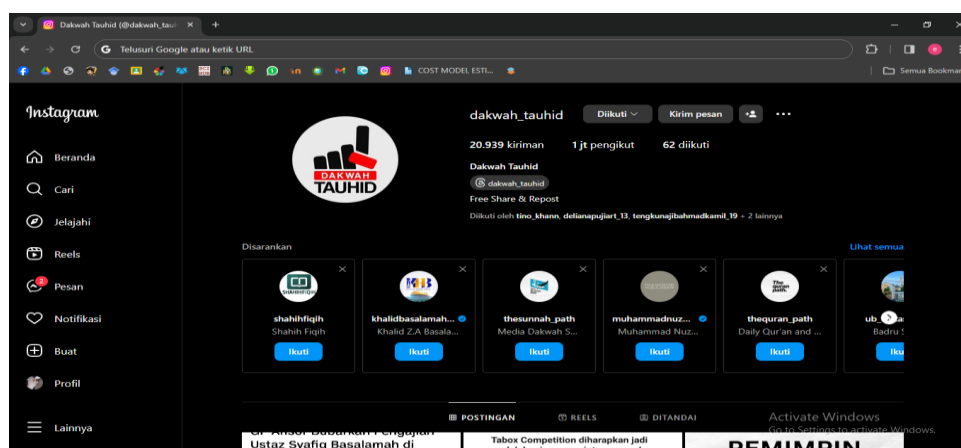


Figure 1. The Instagram Account @dakwah_tauhid

The testimony from the KPI student reveals that Instagram serves as a vital resource for religious gratification, specifically through engagement with the @dakwah_tauhid account. The content provided—such as the theological procedures for atonement and the ethics of political leadership—is considered highly instrumental in providing practical frameworks for daily Islamic living. The informant, Heri, highlighted the contextual relevance of such content during the election period, which assists in informed decision-making. Moreover, he acknowledged Instagram's significant role in democratizing access to religious knowledge. Through accounts like @dakwah_tauhid, the platform transcends mere information sharing; it fosters religious contemplation and the practical implementation of faith, which ultimately contributes to the character building and value alignment of Muslim students.²²

Mediatization of Da'wah Teachings on Instagram

The utilization of Instagram as a medium for fulfilling religious information needs significantly influences the religious identity of students. The manner in which they receive and comprehend Islamic teachings through the content consumed on this platform has become a highly relevant subject of study.²³ In this context, the role of Instagram for Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI) students at UIN Sumatera Utara is particularly pertinent. Instagram offers various features—such as image posts, videos, stories, and live streaming—that enable users to disseminate information through creative and engaging methods. Consequently, Instagram serves as an effective tool for students to learn, share, and expand their understanding of Islam, while acting as a platform for interaction and discussion with both peers and the general public.²⁴

²² Interviewed.

²³ Zulfirman Manik et al., “Mediatization of Da'wah Hadith in the Digital Age: An Analysis of @risyad_bay's TikTok Account.”

²⁴ Zulfirman Manik et al., “Recontextualization of Hadith in TikTok Youth Culture,” *Sufiya Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 SE-Articles (December 5, 2025): 38–51, <https://journal.sufiya.org/index.php/sjis/article/view/204>.

This phenomenon can be analyzed through the lens of **phenomenological theory**. According to **Alfred Schutz**, phenomenology is a method of understanding social action through interpretation to clarify or examine intrinsic meanings, thereby providing an implicit conceptual sensitivity. Schutz builds upon Husserl's thought, focusing on the actual process of understanding and how meaning is assigned, which is subsequently reflected in behavior. In this study, the reflected behavior may manifest as responses to using Instagram for educational communication or the behavioral outcomes of learning derived from the platform.²⁵

The testimony of a KPI student at UIN Sumatera Utara who follows the @dakwah_tauhid account highlights the specific types of content that resonate with the younger generation:

"I am very fond of the content on @dakwah_tauhid. They frequently share images featuring motivational quotes from inspiring *hadiths*. I find the content simple, attractive, and easy to comprehend. The simplicity and clarity of the messages are what appeal to me most. The combination of minimalist visuals with motivational *hadith* texts has a profound impact. I feel inspired to strengthen my religious commitment because the messages are accessible and applicable to daily life".²⁶

The student further described a specific *hadith* post that left a lasting impression: "There was a post regarding the *Sayyidul Istighfar* (the chief prayer for forgiveness). It mentioned that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated that whoever recites it during the day or night with sincere conviction, and passes away before the change of time, shall enter Paradise. This simple yet profound message deeply motivated me to be more diligent in worship and seeking forgiveness, driven by the divine promise conveyed by the Prophet.

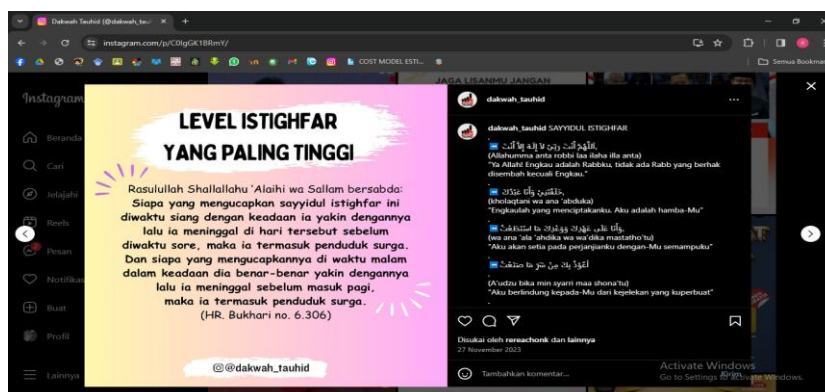


Figure 2. Content of the Instagram Account @dakwah_tauhid

Based on the content analysis of @dakwah_tauhid, the platform disseminates Islamic *da'wah* by emphasizing several fundamental theological pillars, as follows:

²⁵ Ahmad Muzakki Afandi and Zainul Arifin, "Exploring the Cultural Da'wah Strategy of Hadrah Al-Jiduri Art: A Phenomenological Study on Character Building," *Journal of Islamic Education Students (JIES)* 5, no. 1 (May 5, 2025): 252–65, <https://doi.org/10.31958/jies.v5i1.15216>.

²⁶ Interviewed, "Student of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting, UIN North Sumatra."

1. Recognition of Allah's *Uluhiyah* (Divinity) and Exclusive Worship: The content underscores the imperative of acknowledging that Allah alone is worthy of worship, reinforcing the core concept of monotheism (*Tawhid*) in Islam.
2. Acknowledgment of Allah as the Sole Creator: It promotes the conviction that Allah is the absolute creator of the universe and all it encompasses, affirming His oneness as *Al-Khaliq*.
3. Affirmation of Divine Covenants: It highlights the belief that Allah has established promises for His servants, providing spiritual hope and fortitude to the *Ummah*.
4. Hope in Divine Promises: The teachings focus on Allah's assurances, such as forgiveness and mercy, which serve as a primary source of hope for humanity.
5. Seeking Refuge from Personal Transgressions: Encouraging self-awareness of sins and seeking divine protection from the negative consequences of one's own actions.
6. Attributing All Blessings to Allah: Recognizing that every favor received originates from Allah and maintaining a sense of gratitude for His boundless grace.
7. Admission of Human Fallibility: Acknowledging individual sins as a form of admitting human weakness and imperfection.
8. Aspiration for Divine Forgiveness: Emphasizing the importance of seeking Allah's mercy and maintaining the hope for ultimate absolution.
9. Acknowledgment of Allah as the Sole Absolute Pardoner: Asserting the conviction that only Allah possesses the absolute power to forgive sins, reflecting His greatness and justice as the Most Forgiving.

These findings suggest that the efficacy of the @dakwah_tauhid account lies in its ability to facilitate religious message simplification through visual logic. Student testimonies indicate that *hadith* narratives packaged aesthetically—such as the *Sayyidul Istighfar*—are capable of transcending complex cognitive boundaries to become practical spiritual motivations. Ultimately, the student tendency to consume "simple and engaging" content proves that in the digital era, the effectiveness of *da'wah* dissemination is no longer solely determined by substantive depth. Instead, it is increasingly defined by the extent to which a message can resonate emotionally with the audience within an accessible and digestible format.

Impacts of Instagram Utilization as a Da'wah Space

Instagram has emerged as a dominant social media platform among the younger generation for information exchange, including religious discourse. This transition signifies a profound shift from conventional media to social media as a primary means of disseminating and acquiring information. Most Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI) students at UIN Sumatera Utara

possess seamless and rapid access to Instagram. The widespread availability of high-speed internet and smartphones has facilitated their engagement with religious content distributed through this platform.²⁷

The evolution of Instagram has been remarkably rapid; originally a photo and video-sharing application, it has transformed into a highly effective information hub. Various corporations, organizations, institutions, and communities—including KPI students at UIN Sumatera Utara—leverage Instagram as a vital information tool. Instagram is renowned for its emphasis on visual aesthetics, such as imagery and short-form videos. This visual-centric nature makes it an appealing platform for KPI students, who tend to prefer visual content for comprehending and transmitting religious information. Consequently, many religious figures and Islamic influencers have become increasingly active on the platform.²⁸

The impact of utilizing this platform for proselytizing significantly influences KPI students at UIN Sumatera Utara. While Instagram offers unprecedented access to religious knowledge, it simultaneously introduces challenges regarding the validity and credibility of information.²⁹ Students must possess the ability to discern accurate information from trusted sources amidst the proliferation of unverified content. Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge potential negative impacts, such as the exposure to invalid or deviant information and the risk of social media addiction. This is echoed by Fitrah, a KPI student, who remarked:

“Personally, I feel that Instagram usage has positively influenced my religious mindset and practices. I am more inspired to implement religious teachings after engaging with the content shared on the platform. However, I am also aware of the necessity to develop critical thinking skills to filter information, ensuring I do not succumb to narrow interpretations or content that contradicts authentic religious teachings”.³⁰

The researcher concludes that while students feel spiritually inspired, they recognize the imperative of fostering critical literacy to navigate the information encountered on Instagram. This awareness is a prudent step toward avoiding narrow-mindedness and theological inaccuracies. Individuals acknowledge that Instagram presents dualistic outcomes; it offers inspiration but also carries the risk of encountering distorted information. Such awareness is a crucial initial step in self-protection against the negative repercussions of social media consumption. In conclusion, while Instagram contributes positively to religious practices, users must critically evaluate their

²⁷ Kholili, Izudin, and Hakim, “Islamic Proselytizing in Digital Religion in Indonesia: The Challenges of Broadcasting Regulation.”

²⁸ Interviewed, “Student of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting, UIN North Sumatra.”

²⁹ M. Nashoiul Ibad, “Strategi Literasi Dakwah Digital Di Era Media Sosial TikTok: Tantangan Dan Peluang,” *Pelita: Jurnal Studi Islam Mahasiswa UIN Dahwa* 2, no. 2 (May 12, 2025): 145–56, <https://doi.org/10.38073/pelita.v2i2.2189>.

³⁰ Interviewed, “Student of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting, UIN North Sumatra.”

consumption to remain aligned with authentic teachings and avoid the pitfalls of unverified information. This underscores the paramount importance of exercising wisdom and critical scrutiny within the digital religious landscape.

Challenges of Utilizing Instagram as a Da'wah Medium

A profound understanding of these obstacles is essential for comprehending the dynamics of social media usage within a religious context particularly in an academic environment like UIN Sumatera Utara. Student informants highlighted several constraints encountered when utilizing Instagram, stating:

“One of the primary obstacles I face is the presence of unverified content that contradicts religious teachings. Amidst beneficial posts, inaccurate or even conflicting content occasionally emerges. This can be confusing and misleading for users, especially those who do not yet possess a robust religious foundation”.³¹

To mitigate this, students strive to enhance their religious literacy and knowledge. They have learned to be more critical in filtering the content they consume on Instagram, ensuring its alignment with authentic Islamic teachings. Furthermore, they seek references from credible sources and follow accounts managed by prominent scholars or religious experts. Another frequently encountered challenge is the presence of distractions from irrelevant or secular content. Instagram's features, such as stories and explore, often prioritize entertainment or lifestyle themes over religious content, which can divert attention and diminish focus when searching for beneficial religious information.

Informants emphasized that the presence of unverified content poses a significant risk of theological distortion for users with limited religious depth. Consequently, they advocate for a proactive approach: increasing religious literacy, exercising critical discernment, and verifying information through accounts belonging to reputable scholars.³²

Another critical challenge is the inherent distraction caused by secular content.³³ Features like the explore page often algorithmically display lifestyle-oriented content, which fragments the user's focus. Therefore, students emphasize the need for conscious and critical engagement with the platform, even suggesting that Instagram should consider specialized filters or features to help users find religious content that aligns with their beliefs.³⁴

³¹ Interviewed, “Student of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting, UIN North Sumatra.”

³² Interviewed.

³³ Fitri Wahyuningsih, Saddam Hakki, and Riri Susanti, “Preaching Through Social Media in Islamic Religious Education: Analysis of Effectiveness and Challenges in Increasing Religious Awareness,” *Journal of Higher Education and Academic Advancement* 2, no. 9 (July 24, 2025): 400–410, <https://doi.org/10.61796/ejheaa.v2i9.1371>.

³⁴ Interviewed, “Student of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting, UIN North Sumatra.”

These conditions demonstrate that the challenges of *da'wah* on Instagram stem not only from the content itself but also from the media architecture. Algorithms, features, visual displays, and consumption patterns collectively determine how religious messages are discovered, received, and interpreted. Consequently, utilizing Instagram as a *da'wah* space requires a dual awareness. First, an awareness of the importance of message validity to prevent *da'wah* from devolving into the spread of superficial or erroneous information. Second, an awareness of digital media logic to ensure that users are not entirely controlled by the platform's algorithmic flow.³⁵

In conclusion, Instagram as a *da'wah* space presents both opportunities and challenges. The opportunity lies in the platform's ability to expand the reach of Islamic messages, connect users with diverse religious resources, and facilitate interactive discussions. However, the challenges reside in weak content verification, the shift in religious authority, algorithmic distractions, and the tendency to simplify religious messages into brief visual formats. Therefore, Islamic Communication and Broadcasting students must approach Instagram not merely as a distribution tool but as a space that demands critical, ethical, and responsible engagement. Digital *da'wah* must transcend mere presence on social media; it must maintain substantive depth amidst a media logic that is inherently fast-paced, popular, and competitive.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI) students at UIN Sumatera Utara utilize Instagram as an academic channel that integrates into their learning processes and Islamic communication practices. Instagram is leveraged not merely for entertainment or social networking but also as a pivotal platform for disseminating academic information, promoting campus activities, and fostering a space for developing *da'wah* comprehension. In practice, students engage with and access diverse proselytizing content, notably through accounts such as @dakwah_tauhid, which represents an online manifestation of Salafi *da'wah*. This type of content resonates with students due to its creative, visual, concise, and accessible presentation, effectively delivering religious messages that feel pertinent to their daily lives. The teachings within such content are perceived as inspirational, particularly in motivating students to strengthen their religious understanding and deepen their spiritual proximity to Allah.

The implications of these findings suggest that while Instagram holds a significant position as a dual-purpose space for academic dissemination and digital *da'wah*, the religious content circulating on the platform is not accepted without scrutiny. KPI students at UIN Sumatera Utara exhibit critical discernment in evaluating, filtering, and selecting the *da'wah* content they consume.

³⁵ Hadiyanto, Putri, and Fazli, "Religious Moderation in Instagram: An Islamic Interpretation Perspective."

This filtration process is conducted by aligning received messages with the Islamic teachings studied within their academic environment and cross-referencing information with trusted sources and appropriate religious authorities. Consequently, the use of Instagram does not merely position students as passive recipients of *da'wah* messages; rather, it cultivates them as media users possessed of academic, religious, and ethical consciousness in comprehending and disseminating Islamic teachings within the digital sphere.

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