

Counter Action Against Fake News: Ethical Challenges in Digital Da'wa

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Abstract: In the digital era, where misinformation and AI-generated content spread rapidly through social media, Islamic digital da'wah in Indonesia faces serious challenges in maintaining communication ethics and accuracy. According to the 2023 Ipsos, 75% of Indonesian respondents believe that AI enables the creation of convincing fake content, and 63% admit they could be personally influenced by it. This study employs a quantitative approach by analyzing secondary data from the report to assess levels of trust, digital media consumption habits, and youth ability to distinguish between true and false information. The findings reveal a notable gap between individuals' high self-confidence in filtering information and the persistent high exposure to disinformation. In a country with one of the world's highest social media engagement rates, these results underscore the urgency of strengthening digital literacy and embedding Islamic communication values—such as *tabayyun* (verification) and *amanah* (trustworthiness)—as strategic foundations for ethical digital da'wah among the youth.

Keywords: Digital da'wa, misinformation, AI-generated content, ethics, Indonesian youth, Islamic communication, digital literacy, tabayyun.

Abstrak: Di era digital, ketika misinformasi dan konten buatan kecerdasan buatan (AI) menyebar dengan cepat di media sosial, dakwah digital Islam di Indonesia menghadapi tantangan serius dalam menjaga akurasi dan etika komunikasi. Berdasarkan Laporan Digital Ipsos 2023, 75% responden di Indonesia percaya bahwa AI memungkinkan pembuatan konten palsu yang meyakinkan, dan 63% mengakui bahwa mereka dapat dipengaruhi oleh informasi tersebut. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan menganalisis data sekunder dari laporan tersebut untuk mengevaluasi tingkat kepercayaan, kebiasaan konsumsi media digital, dan kemampuan generasi muda dalam membedakan informasi yang benar dan salah. Hasil analisis menunjukkan adanya kesenjangan antara tingkat kepercayaan diri individu yang tinggi dalam memilah informasi dan kenyataan tingginya paparan terhadap disinformasi. Di tengah tingginya penetrasi media sosial di Indonesia, temuan ini menekankan pentingnya peningkatan literasi digital dan internalisasi prinsip komunikasi Islam—seperti *tabayyun* (verifikasi) dan *amanah* informasi—sebagai langkah strategis dalam memperkuat etika dakwah digital di kalangan pemuda.

Kata kunci: Dakwah digital, misinformasi, konten buatan AI, etika, pemuda Indonesia, komunikasi Islam, literasi digital, tabayyun.

1. Introduction

The phrase “fake news” surged into global popularity during the Trump administration, where it often served as a political catch-all for dismissing unfavorable media, regardless of accuracy. Academic research highlights that the term itself is poorly

defined and heavily politicized, prompting scholars to prefer more rigorous terminology such as Information Disorder, which distinguishes between misinformation (unintentional falsehoods) and disinformation (deliberate deception). While the circulation of false or misleading information is hardly new, the proliferation of social media and messaging platforms has exponentially increased its speed, reach, and resonance. These platforms now function as core information sources for broad audiences, making them efficient conduits for truth distortion and manipulation of public opinion (Surjatmodjo et al., 2024).

In many Muslim-majority countries, digital propaganda networks have evolved into sophisticated ecosystems that exploit religious, ethnic, and political divides—especially during election cycles. These networks often consist of politically motivated “buzzers”, extremist groups, or even automated AI-driven content mills. In Malaysia, Saidin & Azrun (2024) stated that disinformation has been weaponized to influence electoral outcomes and stir ethnic tensions through coordinated social media campaigns. Likewise by Elmas (2023), in Turkey, pro-government troll armies and bot networks are frequently deployed to suppress dissent and manipulate public opinion, particularly by amplifying polarizing religious or nationalist narratives. These developments reveal how disinformation in digital spaces can erode democratic processes and undermine social cohesion, especially when religious sentiment is misused for divisive agendas.

In Indonesia, the issue is exemplified by the notorious Saracen group—a coordinated syndicate that spread hate speech and fake news for political purposes. Though dismantled, Saracen’s legacy continues through more decentralized “buzzer” networks that use AI tools and social media algorithms to target susceptible audiences with divisive content (Bratajaya, 2023). While Indonesia’s Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE), revised in 2023, seeks to criminalize the dissemination of harmful misinformation in alignment with the Constitution and international human rights norms, it has also drawn criticism for vague legal definitions that can be exploited to silence journalists or activists (Wibowo, 2021). For Islamic digital da’wah, Hasanah (2024) states this landscape presents a dual challenge: protecting audiences from deception and preserving the ethical communication values upheld in Islamic teachings. Therefore, building robust digital literacy that is both critical and faith-aware is essential in countering propaganda while fostering constructive and truthful online discourse.

Countering fake news in da’wah is urgent—not only to protect audiences from deception but also to uphold Islamic ethical principles (Safiyyah & Rafida, 2023). This study examines how young Muslim preachers and digital da’wah practitioners recognize, respond to, and resist misinformation, stressing the need for ethical digital literacy grounded in truth, trust, and moral responsibility. In a nation as digitally interconnected as Indonesia, effectively countering fake news in religious outreach requires both technical skills and a deep ethical commitment (Maulidna et al., 2025).

Recent data from the Ipsos (2023) underscore the growing concern of misinformation among Indonesian internet users, particularly youth. These surveys reveal a high level of exposure to unverified content and a declining trust in digital news sources, making young digital da’i both vulnerable to and potentially powerful in combating fake news. By leveraging insights from these studies, this paper emphasizes the strategic role of young Muslim content creators in shaping an online ecosystem that values accuracy, ethical responsibility, and constructive dialogue.

In this context, the paper highlights the urgency of strengthening faith-informed digital literacy among Indonesian youth—not only to protect themselves from deception, but also to cultivate a culture of truthfulness, compassion, and responsibility in online communication (Putri et al., 2024). Islamic principles such as *tabayyun* (verification), *akhlaq al-karimah* (noble character), and *amar ma’ruf nahi munkar* (promoting good and preventing harm) are emphasized as ethical foundations that can guide youth-driven digital da’wah in countering fake news and fostering a healthier online discourse..

2. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a quantitative approach to examine how Indonesian youth engage with digital da'wah content while navigating misinformation online. The research relies entirely on secondary data analysis using the Ipsos (2023) Indonesia Report. This dataset provides quantitative insights into youth media consumption patterns, levels of trust in digital content, and perceived exposure to disinformation, particularly among individuals aged 15–24.

Descriptive statistical analysis is used to evaluate trends related to digital behavior, self-assessed competence in identifying fake news, and confidence in others' abilities to do the same. Comparative data from other Southeast Asian countries—such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand—are also included to contextualize Indonesia's position in the region. These metrics are used to identify gaps in digital literacy and assess the urgency for ethical reinforcement in digital communication. The study interprets the data through an Islamic ethical lens, focusing on principles like *tabayyun* (verification), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and the promotion of accurate, beneficial information in online da'wah contexts.

3. Results and Discussion

Using the five indicators from the Ipsos (2023) data, we can observe both confidence gaps and risk perceptions among muslim nations:

Tabel 1. Perceptions of AI and Disinformation: A Comparative View from Muslim-Majority Countries

Indicator	Indonesia	Malaysia	Turkey
Believe AI makes fake news more realistic	89%	76%	87%
Believe AI will worsen disinformation	45%	51%	53%
Confidence in self distinguishing real vs fake news	85%	71%	74%
Confidence in others distinguishing real vs fake news	54%	46%	49%
More lying/misuse of facts than 30 years ago (perception of disorder)	68%	56%	64%

Key Insights and Interpretation

1. Widespread Recognition of AI-Driven Fake News

All three countries express high awareness that AI can make fake news appear more convincing—Indonesia leads at 89%, followed by Turkey (87%) and Malaysia (76%). This shows strong regional concern that manipulated content could influence public and religious discourse, especially in online da'wah and political communication.

2. Growing Concern That AI Worsens Disinformation

Turkey (53%) and Malaysia (51%) express more anxiety that AI will exacerbate the spread of disinformation than Indonesia (45%). This suggests that regulatory and public discourse on AI's risks may be more developed in Turkey and Malaysia, where online campaigns have historically been tied to political or sectarian tension.

3. Trust Gap in Detecting Fake News

A common pattern across all three countries is the gap between personal confidence and trust in others' ability to detect fake news. Indonesia shows the widest trust gap (85% vs. 54%), which may point to social vulnerabilities in religious or community-based networks—especially where da'wah is shared peer-to-peer through platforms like WhatsApp or Telegram.

4. Heightened Perception of Information Disorder

Indonesians (68%) and Turks (64%) strongly believe that the truth is more distorted today than 30 years ago, compared to 56% in Malaysia. This generational distrust indicates a shared historical consciousness of rising propaganda, misinformation, and manipulation in public information spheres.

According to the Ipsos (2023) Indonesia Report, digital media remains the dominant information source for Indonesian youth aged 15–24. Over 78% rely on platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram for accessing both news and religious content, while WhatsApp and Telegram continue to be the leading channels for distributing da'wah-related messages. Similar patterns emerge in other Muslim-majority countries included in the 2023 Ipsos survey—particularly Malaysia and Turkey—where high engagement with social media platforms is also accompanied by growing concerns over disinformation. Table 1 provides a comparative snapshot of digital platform preferences among youth in these countries based on available Ipsos data.

Table 2. Youth Digital Platform Usage in Muslim-Majority Countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey)

Country	YouTube	TikTok	Instagram	App Messenger	Source & Notes
Indonesia	~95%	~64%	~70%	~94% WhatsApp	Ipsos (2023)
Malaysia	~92%	~70%	~68%	~88% WhatsApp	Digital 2023: Malaysia (Kemp, 2023a)
Turkey	~85%	~58%	~62%	~80% Telegram/WhatsApp	Digital 2023: Turkey ((Kemp, 2023b)

These findings reveal Indonesia as the leading country in WhatsApp (94%) and YouTube (95%) usage among youth, underscoring the central role of closed messaging systems and video platforms in religious content circulation. The strong presence on Instagram (70%) and TikTok (64%) also indicates a preference for short-form, visual communication, especially among younger digital natives.

This usage pattern has several key implications for ethical digital da'wah in Indonesia just like in this table 3:

Table 1 Strategic Solutions for Ethical Digital Da'wah Among Muslim Youth in the Social Media Era

Focus Area	Proposed Solution	Source	Key Insight
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1. Platform Prioritization	Develop certified video-based da'wah content verified by MUI or credible ustadz; distribute through YouTube and WhatsApp groups.	(Ahmad et al., 2021)	Institutionalized da'wah via multimedia strengthens public trust and reduces ambiguity in online religious interpretation
2. Cross-Platform Strategy	Train youth in visual digital storytelling and Islamic media ethics for TikTok/Instagram da'wah content, using short-form, positive religious messages.	(Yusof & Karim, 2023)	Islamic micro-content can be made appealing and ethical when youth are equipped with content strategy and digital literacy.
3. Regional Relevance	Initiate cross-border da'wah collaborations with Malaysia and Brunei via Islamic NGOs or ASEAN university networks for moderate and inclusive Islamic campaigns.	(Rahim & Idris, 2022)	Regional partnerships offer scalable da'wah initiatives, helping to share moderate narratives in response to shared digital threats.
4. Risk of Virality (Verification)	Establish digital literacy modules in pesantren and Islamic universities focusing on tabayyun, hoax filtering, AI-generated fakes, and ethical reposting practices.	(Lubis & Salim, 2020)	Faith-based media literacy reduces misinterpretation of religious content and counters unverified preaching trends.
5. Youth Training and Leadership	Launch mentorship programs for young Muslim influencers on how to balance dakwah ethics with platform algorithm trends (e.g., virality, engagement, clickbait pressure).	(Nurhayati et al., 2023)	Youth da'i need ethical coaching to avoid viral traps while remaining effective in engaging religious discourse online.

Overall, from the table 3, the data highlight both the opportunities and risks inherent in youth-driven digital da'wah ecosystems. The findings reinforce the urgency of integrating ethical literacy and critical thinking into da'wah efforts, particularly in a country where digital platforms are central to religious engagement.

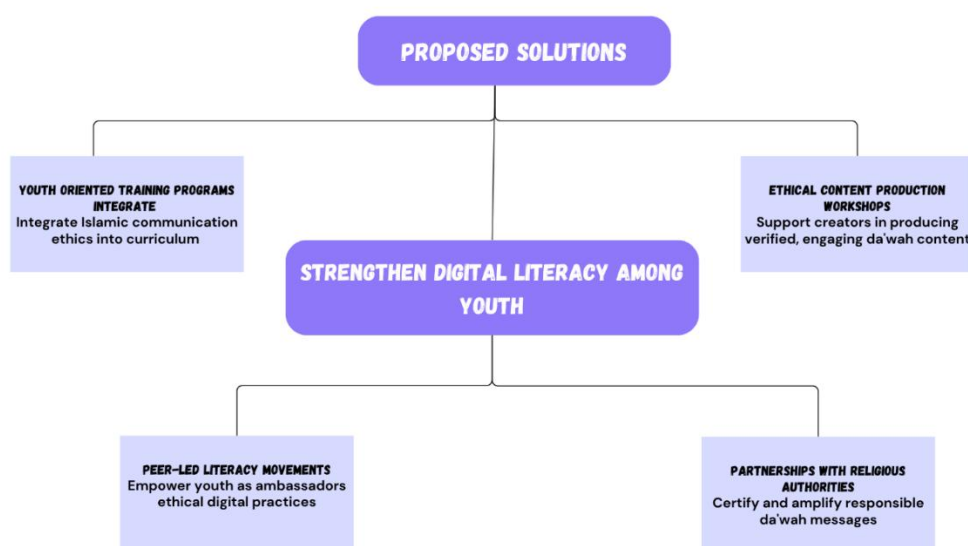
Proposed Solutions

To address the gap between high self-confidence and persistent exposure to disinformation, targeted digital literacy initiatives must be developed with a focus on Islamic ethical communication principles. Firstly, youth-oriented training programs should be integrated into pesantren, madrasah, and university curricula, emphasizing practical skills to identify, verify, and ethically disseminate information online. These programs should incorporate core Islamic values such as tabayyun (verification before

believing or sharing), amanah (responsible sharing of truth), and hikmah (wisdom in delivery), ensuring alignment between digital practices and da'wah ethics.

Secondly, digital da'wah content creators should be supported through ethical content production workshops that promote engaging formats—such as micro-videos and infographics—without compromising truth or fostering sensationalism. Partnerships with institutions like the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) and media literacy NGOs can help certify and amplify verified da'wah content through popular platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and WhatsApp.

Thirdly, peer-led da'wah literacy movements can be initiated, where trained youth act as ambassadors of ethical digital communication within their communities. By creating a participatory and reflective culture of content sharing, young Muslims can become critical agents of truth and unity in the face of increasingly persuasive online falsehoods.



Gambar 1. Proposed Solution Strategies

These strategies from Image 1 not only reduce the risks of disinformation but also cultivate a generation of youth equipped with both technical literacy and spiritual integrity—a dual foundation essential for futureproofing da'wah in the digital age.

4. Conclusions

In an era where AI-generated content and misinformation circulate rapidly through social media, the role of ethical digital da'wah has become increasingly critical, especially in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Turkey. The findings from Ipsos-Luminare 2024 and supporting digital trend data demonstrate that while young Muslims are highly active across platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, they remain vulnerable to unverified content. High self-confidence in filtering misinformation is often unmatched by actual media literacy, creating a significant trust and perception gap. In Indonesia, for example, 89% of respondents believe AI makes fake news more realistic, while only 54% trust others to detect such content. This illustrates the urgency of embedding Islamic communication values—such as tabayyun (verification), amanah (trustworthiness), and akhlaq al-karimah (noble character)—within digital literacy frameworks for youth da'wah practitioners.

To address these challenges, a multi-dimensional strategy is needed. Certified and ethically framed video-based da'wah should be prioritized on dominant platforms like YouTube and WhatsApp, while short-form content on Instagram and TikTok must adhere to Islamic media ethics. Cross-border collaborations in Southeast Asia can amplify

moderate Islamic narratives and foster shared resistance to disinformation. Additionally, pesantren and Islamic institutions should integrate digital literacy programs that focus on detecting hoaxes, filtering AI-generated fakes, and responsibly engaging with algorithm-driven platforms. Finally, mentorship for young Muslim influencers is essential to balance online virality with religious responsibility. By aligning ethical principles with platform-savvy strategies, Muslim youth can become resilient digital agents of truth and compassion in the evolving online ecosystem.

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