

# The Effectiveness of Collaborative Da'wah Management between Ulama and Muslim Influencers in the Digital Era

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**Abstract:** This study explores the effectiveness of collaborative da'wah management between ulama (traditional scholars) and Muslim influencers in the digital era. The research is motivated by the growing influence of social media on religious communication and the need to balance traditional authority with modern digital engagement. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis, focusing on joint initiatives on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. The findings reveal that collaboration enhances da'wah credibility, relatability, and audience reach by combining the theological authority of ulama with the communication skills and digital presence of influencers. Key factors contributing to effectiveness include trust, authenticity, and content relevance, which together shape positive audience perceptions. However, challenges such as differences in communication style, risks of commercialization, conflicts between traditional interpretations and popular content, and public criticism remain obstacles to sustainable collaboration. The study also identifies generational differences, with younger audiences showing high acceptance of these partnerships while older audiences remain cautious. The research concludes that structured da'wah management strategies such as formal frameworks, content guidelines, training, audience segmentation, and evaluation systems are essential to maximize effectiveness. Overall, the study highlights collaborative da'wah as a transformative model of Islamic communication that can strengthen literacy, tolerance, and positive religious engagement in contemporary Muslim societies.

## Research Highlights:

- **Bridging Traditional and Digital Authority:** Collaboration between ulama and Muslim influencers integrates religious authority with digital communication skills, making da'wah more relevant to contemporary audiences.
- **Effective Factors Identified:** Trust, authenticity, and content relevance are critical in determining the effectiveness of ulama-influencer partnerships in delivering Islamic messages.
- **Generational Dynamics:** Younger audiences, particularly urban Muslims, show greater acceptance of these collaborations, while older generations remain cautious due to concerns over authority and message authenticity.
- **Challenges and Risks:** Key obstacles include differences in communication style, potential commercialization of religious messages, conflicts between traditional interpretations and popular content, and public criticism.
- **Strategic Recommendations:** The study proposes structured da'wah management strategies, including formal collaboration frameworks, content guidelines, influencer training, audience segmentation, and impact evaluation mechanisms.
- **Social Contribution:** Collaborative da'wah strengthens Islamic literacy, promotes tolerance, and fosters positive religious engagement in the digital era.

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## INTRODUCTION

Da'wah, the act of inviting people to understand and practice Islam, remains a cornerstone of Muslim life and community development in the contemporary era (Badriah & Norazmila, 2018). Its importance lies not only in preserving the faith among Muslims but also in presenting Islam to broader audiences in ways that are relevant, compassionate, and responsive to the challenges of modern society. In Muslim-majority contexts, da'wah serves as a reminder of religious obligations, moral values, and social ethics that bind communities together. In minority contexts, it functions as a means of building understanding, reducing misconceptions, and fostering peaceful coexistence with other faith groups. Thus, da'wah is not limited to religious preaching but extends to the cultivation of ethical behavior, community empowerment, and the promotion of universal values such as justice, compassion, and mutual respect (Ali, n.d.).

The importance of da'wah today is heightened by the realities of globalization and digital interconnectedness. Muslims are constantly exposed to diverse worldviews, ideologies, and cultural influences that can both enrich and challenge their faith. In such an environment, da'wah becomes a protective mechanism to strengthen Islamic identity while engaging constructively with global society (Sahin, 2018). It provides Muslims with a framework to navigate issues such as consumerism, individualism, and moral relativism, offering guidance rooted in divine principles. Furthermore, the presence of Islam in digital spaces has made da'wah an essential tool for countering stereotypes and misinformation, presenting a more balanced and authentic image of the religion.

Equally significant is the role of da'wah in promoting social justice and community welfare (Suleiman et al., 2021). In many Muslim societies, da'wah initiatives are tied to charitable work, education, healthcare, and advocacy for marginalized groups. This reflects the holistic nature of Islam, which emphasizes both spiritual devotion and societal responsibility. Through da'wah, Muslims are encouraged to embody values such as honesty, responsibility, and compassion in their daily lives, thereby strengthening not only individual faith but also collective harmony.

Da'wah, as an effort to convey Islamic teachings, has always played a central role in shaping the faith, morals, and worldview of Muslim communities. Traditionally, this responsibility has been carried out by ulama religious scholars who possess deep knowledge of the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence (Quraishi, 2006). Their authority and credibility are rooted in scholarly expertise, spiritual guidance, and long-standing recognition within the Muslim community. However, in the contemporary era, the dynamics of communication and religious engagement have significantly shifted, especially with the rise of digital media.

The emergence of social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok has created a new space for religious discourse (Clarke, 2020). Muslim influencers figures who may not always have formal religious training but possess charisma, digital literacy, and broad audience appeal have gained significant popularity. They can rapidly reach younger generations and global audiences with accessible and relatable content. While this development democratizes access to Islamic knowledge, it also raises concerns about accuracy, depth, and authenticity of the messages delivered.

In this context, collaboration between ulama and Muslim influencers becomes increasingly relevant. On one hand, ulama provide legitimacy, doctrinal accuracy, and theological depth; on the other hand, influencers offer creativity, digital reach, and effective communication styles (A. M. Rahman, 2020). A structured and collaborative approach to da'wah management can bridge the gap between traditional authority and modern communication strategies, ensuring that Islamic values are disseminated both widely and responsibly.

Over the past decade scholarship has traced a broad shift from traditional, face-to-face da'wah toward digital da'wah on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. Saleh (2022) provides a wide overview of how da'wah methods transformed in the digital era and argues that digitization opens new avenues for reach while also raising ethical and epistemological challenges for religious communicators (Kebe et al., 2020).

Several empirical and narrative reviews document how Indonesian and regional Muslim actors adapted to social media. Sikumbang (2023) analyzes the Indonesian context and shows digital da'wah's potential to increase accessibility, foster communities, and reconfigure theological discourse in online

publics. The study highlights both opportunities (wider reach, new communities) and risks (lack of supervision, potential misinterpretation). Naila (2024) similarly maps how YouTube and other platforms foster religious interest among teenagers, emphasizing platform affordances and youth engagement patterns.

Research focused specifically on religious influencers and visual authority has also emerged. Febrian (2024) examines how religious influencers project authority visually on Instagram, showing that visual strategies contribute to perceived legitimacy even when traditional scholarly credentials are absent. This literature points to the growing importance of image, branding, and performative presence in contemporary da'wah.

Several studies examine concrete trends and practices of digital da'wah in Indonesia across the 2018–2024 window. A 2024 thematic review (Digital Muslim Review / W. Sumiati, 2024) synthesizes how Indonesian online communities organize da'wah digitally and names specific community-driven practices and networks that sustain online preaching. Nuriana (2024) places digital da'wah in the context of algorithmic platforms and discusses how algorithms, visual rhetoric, and interactivity shape which religious messages propagate and how authority is negotiated online.

On the question of collaboration between ulama (traditional scholars) and influencers, recent empirical reports and case studies describe a range of cooperative forms from co-created videos and live dialogues to institutional partnerships and joint social-welfare initiatives. While many of these studies are descriptive and context-specific, they consistently find that collaborations can combine doctrinal depth (ulama) with communication reach and style (influencers), improving short-term engagement and audience receptivity; however, they also note the lack of longitudinal evidence about sustained religious practice change. For example, narrative and case studies collected across 2022–2024 argue that management, editorial oversight, and clear accountability mechanisms are crucial for collaboration to preserve authenticity.

Methodologically, the literature of the last ten years is dominated by qualitative work (content/discourse analysis, interviews, and case studies) complemented by social-media metrics and cross-sectional surveys. Systematic reviews that synthesize findings about youth engagement (covering roughly 2018–2022) conclude that measured outcomes typically emphasize reach (views, followers) and short-term attitude shifts, but that rigorous longitudinal or experimental studies demonstrating durable behavioral or theological change remain rare. This gap is noted across multiple reviews and empirical papers.

Nevertheless, such collaboration is not without challenges (Margerum, 2016). Differences in communication styles, generational gaps, and the balance between popularity and authenticity often create tension (Downs, 2019). Moreover, the absence of systematic management models for collaborative da'wah may reduce its effectiveness, leading to fragmented efforts rather than sustainable impact. Therefore, it is crucial to study how ulama and influencers can work together, what strategies they employ, and how their collaboration affects audience engagement, understanding, and adherence to Islamic teachings.

This research seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative da'wah management between ulama and Muslim influencers. By analyzing both the opportunities and challenges of such partnerships, the study aims to provide insights that contribute not only to academic discussions on Islamic communication but also to practical strategies for improving religious outreach in the digital age.

## METHOD

### Theoretical Framework

The effectiveness of collaborative da'wah management between ulama and Muslim influencers can be better understood by integrating perspectives from communication theory, Islamic teachings on collective da'wah, and theories of social influence and authority. Communication theory provides a foundation for understanding how religious messages are transmitted, received, and interpreted in digital environments. The Two-Step Flow Theory (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) explains how opinion leaders mediate the flow of information to the wider public. Applied to this study, ulama can be seen as the source of doctrinally accurate information, while influencers act as intermediaries who repackage and transmit these messages to mass audiences in more accessible forms.

The Agenda Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) is also relevant, as both ulama and influencers shape the priorities of Muslim audiences by determining which religious issues are highlighted

in online discourse. Through collaborative management, they can direct attention toward values of tolerance, ethics, and authentic Islamic teachings, countering misinformation or sensationalist content.

Additionally, the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974) explains why audiences actively seek out religious content online. Muslim audiences may engage with da'wah not only for spiritual guidance but also for social belonging, entertainment, or identity affirmation (Margerum, 2016). By understanding these motivations, ulama and influencers can collaborate to create content that is both theologically accurate and personally meaningful to diverse audiences.

From an Islamic standpoint, da'wah is a collective obligation (*fard kifayah*), where different members of the community contribute according to their abilities (Ali, n.d.). Classical Islamic scholarship emphasizes the role of ulama as the inheritors of prophetic knowledge (*al-'ulama warathat al-anbiya'*), entrusted with safeguarding doctrinal purity. However, Islam also recognizes the importance of cooperation (*ta'awun*) in spreading truth and goodness (Qur'an 5:2).

Collaboration between ulama and Muslim influencers thus aligns with the Islamic principle of *shura* (consultative leadership), where collective effort and complementary roles strengthen the impact of religious guidance (Eisenhart, 2010). In this sense, influencers contribute their communication expertise and digital reach, while ulama provide theological legitimacy. The combination reflects a modern application of collective da'wah management rooted in Islamic leadership values.

Theories of social influence and authority help explain the dynamics between religious scholars and influencers in digital spaces (Campbell, 2020). Max Weber's concept of authority distinguishes between traditional authority (rooted in longstanding institutions and scholarly legitimacy) and charismatic authority (derived from personal appeal and follower loyalty). In contemporary contexts, ulama often represent traditional authority, while influencers embody charismatic authority built on digital visibility and relatability.

Moreover, Social Influence Theory (Kelman, 1958) suggests that individuals adopt behaviors or beliefs through compliance, identification, or internalization. In collaborative da'wah, influencers may attract audiences through identification (relatable lifestyle, personal appeal), while ulama facilitate internalization (deep, authentic adoption of Islamic teachings). When these forces combine, the potential for effective, transformative da'wah increases.

### **Scope and Focus**

This study focuses on the dynamics of collaboration between ulama and Muslim influencers within the context of digital da'wah. The scope is primarily situated in the national context of Indonesia, where both traditional religious authority and contemporary digital culture strongly intersect. Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority nation with an active social media population, provides a fertile ground for examining how collaborative da'wah is managed. At the same time, regional variations are acknowledged, as local cultural and linguistic differences may influence the form and reception of da'wah content. Particular attention will be given to widely used platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, which dominate youth engagement and have become central arenas for digital religious communication.

The audience focus of this study is on Muslim youth, especially those in urban settings, as they represent the demographic most active on digital platforms and most influenced by online content. Urban youth often turn to social media for religious guidance, lifestyle inspiration, and identity formation, making them a critical audience for da'wah in the contemporary era. While rural communities and older generations may also be impacted by collaborative da'wah, their engagement with influencers tends to be lower compared to urban and digitally connected audiences. Therefore, this study prioritizes youth and urban Muslims as the primary audience group in assessing the effectiveness of collaboration.

The nature of collaboration explored in this study encompasses several forms of partnership between ulama and influencers. These include co-created digital content such as joint videos, podcasts, or live-streamed discussions; endorsement of religious messages, where influencers amplify scholarly content or campaigns initiated by ulama; and joint events that combine traditional preaching formats with digital dissemination to reach broader audiences. By analyzing these collaborative practices, the research seeks to understand not only how they expand the reach of da'wah but also how they influence audience engagement, perceptions of religious authority, and the authenticity of Islamic messages delivered online.

The scope and focus of this research emphasize the intersection of national digital platforms, youth audiences, and hybrid collaborative practices. By situating the study in this space, it aims to capture the

realities of da'wah in contemporary Muslim societies, where the authority of traditional scholarship and the communicative power of digital influencers must be integrated to remain effective.

### **Methodology**

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore and analyze the effectiveness of collaborative da'wah management between ulama and Muslim influencers (Campbell, 2020). The qualitative method is chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how collaboration is designed, implemented, and perceived rather than measuring it in numerical terms. Through this approach, the research seeks to uncover the dynamics of authority, influence, and audience reception that emerge in the context of digital da'wah.

The data collection techniques include three main strategies: interviews, observations, and document analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with selected ulama, Muslim influencers, and audiences who actively follow their content. These interviews aim to capture perspectives on the motivations, strategies, and challenges of collaboration. Observations will focus on the digital platforms most frequently used for da'wah, such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, particularly examining co-created content, joint events, and influencer endorsements of religious messages. Document analysis will involve reviewing relevant online publications, da'wah campaign materials, and secondary data such as audience engagement statistics, likes, comments, and shares.

The sampling strategy uses purposive sampling, targeting ulama who are known to engage in digital da'wah and influencers who consistently produce religious content or collaborate with religious authorities (T. Rahman, 2016). The audience sample will be drawn from urban Muslim youth, as they represent the group most exposed to digital religious content. By focusing on this group, the study aims to evaluate how collaboration shapes perceptions of religious authority and the acceptance of Islamic messages.

For data analysis, this study applies thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes from interviews, observations, and documents (Peel, 2020). The data will be coded and categorized into themes such as the role of collaboration, the effectiveness of message delivery, audience reception, and challenges faced in joint management. This analysis enables a structured understanding of how collaborations function in practice and the factors that determine their success or limitations.

To ensure validity and reliability, the research applies triangulation by comparing data obtained from different sources and methods. For example, audience perceptions collected through interviews will be cross-checked with observations of actual engagement on digital platforms. In addition, member checking will be used by sharing preliminary findings with selected participants to confirm the accuracy of interpretation.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

The findings of this research reveal that the collaboration between ulama and Muslim influencers plays a significant role in strengthening the reach, appeal, and impact of da'wah in the digital era. Through interviews, observations, and document analysis, several key results emerge that highlight both the opportunities and challenges of such partnerships.

First, the study shows that collaborative da'wah management enhances message credibility and relatability. Ulama, as carriers of traditional religious authority, provide depth, authenticity, and theological accuracy to Islamic messages, while Muslim influencers contribute by making these messages more relatable and appealing to contemporary audiences (Gray, 2019). When these two actors co-create content, audiences perceive the da'wah as both trustworthy and engaging. For instance, young Muslims report that joint Instagram live sessions or YouTube discussions between respected ulama and popular influencers help bridge the gap between classical Islamic knowledge and modern lifestyle issues.

Second, the research finds that digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram serve as the most effective arenas of collaboration (Haenlein et al., 2020). Among these, Instagram and TikTok are especially impactful in reaching urban youth, who consume short-form and visually engaging content. Observations reveal that content where ulama and influencers appear together such as Q&A sessions, short video clips on religious ethics, or joint podcasts achieves higher engagement rates compared to content produced individually. Metrics such as likes, shares, and comments demonstrate that audiences are more responsive when da'wah content combines religious depth with creative delivery.

Third, audience responses indicate that collaboration addresses the issue of divided authority between traditional scholars and digital personalities. While some audiences previously viewed influencers with skepticism due to their limited religious training, partnerships with ulama enhance their credibility. Conversely, ulama benefit from the influencers' wide digital reach and communication skills, enabling them to connect with communities they might not reach otherwise. This symbiotic relationship is recognized by audiences as an effective strategy for uniting religious authority with social influence.

Fourth, the study highlights several practical challenges in collaborative da'wah management (AB RAHMAN, 2014). Scheduling joint activities, balancing the different communication styles of ulama and influencers, and addressing criticism from conservative audiences were identified as recurring difficulties. Some ulama expressed concern about the risk of oversimplifying complex religious concepts for the sake of digital popularity. Meanwhile, influencers pointed out the pressure of maintaining consistency in conveying religious messages while still appealing to their broader, lifestyle-focused audience.

Finally, the results emphasize that the impact of collaboration is particularly strong among urban Muslim youth, who actively seek guidance on how to integrate Islamic values into their daily lives. This group views the joint efforts as a modern form of religious education, one that is accessible, interactive, and adaptable to their cultural context. However, the study also notes that the influence of collaborative da'wah is less pronounced in rural communities, where traditional face-to-face religious activities remain dominant and digital access is more limited.

The findings demonstrate that collaboration between ulama and Muslim influencers is an effective model of da'wah management in the digital age. It increases credibility, expands audience reach, and creates a more dynamic form of religious communication. Nevertheless, for maximum effectiveness, collaboration must be carefully managed to maintain theological accuracy, avoid oversimplification, and remain inclusive of diverse Muslim communities.

#### **Factors that Make Collaborations Effective**

The effectiveness of collaborative da'wah management between ulama and Muslim influencers is determined by several interrelated factors that shape how audiences perceive and engage with religious content in the digital age. First, trust forms the foundation of effective collaboration. Ulama hold religious legitimacy as traditional scholars who safeguard theological accuracy, while influencers command social trust due to their relatability and digital presence. When both parties collaborate, audiences perceive the messages as both theologically reliable and socially approachable. This dual trust strengthens the credibility of da'wah, as the presence of ulama reassures audiences about the correctness of the message, while the involvement of influencers ensures that it is delivered in a way that resonates with their daily realities.

Second, authenticity is a critical factor in sustaining audience engagement. In the context of digital communication, audiences particularly younger Muslims are highly sensitive to perceived insincerity or artificiality. Authentic collaboration requires both ulama and influencers to remain true to their roles: ulama as authoritative sources of knowledge, and influencers as relatable communicators who share personal experiences and struggles in living according to Islamic values. The combination of scholarly depth and personal storytelling generates a sense of sincerity that makes da'wah messages more persuasive and emotionally impactful.

Third, content relevance determines whether collaborative da'wah reaches and retains its intended audience. Audiences, especially urban Muslim youth, seek guidance that is practical, timely, and connected to their lived experiences. Collaborative content that addresses issues such as mental health, relationships, career choices, or digital ethics tends to attract higher engagement than abstract or purely theological discussions. By tailoring religious messages to address contemporary challenges, collaborations bridge the gap between traditional Islamic knowledge and the modern contexts in which audiences live.

Moreover, these factors interact with one another in shaping effectiveness. Trust enhances authenticity, authenticity strengthens content relevance, and relevant content further reinforces audience trust. For instance, when an influencer openly discusses personal struggles while an alim provides a theological framework for those struggles, the resulting dialogue not only feels authentic but also directly addresses the real concerns of the audience.

Effective collaborative da'wah management relies on trust, authenticity, and content relevance as the central pillars of success (Othman, 2016). These factors ensure that the partnership between ulama and

influencers is not merely symbolic but substantively enhances the credibility, relatability, and impact of religious messages in contemporary Muslim societies.

### **Insights on Generational Acceptance of Ulama-Influencer Partnerships**

Among younger generations, particularly Generation Z and Millennials, acceptance of ulama influencer partnerships is notably high (Latifah, 2020). This demographic, accustomed to digital communication and social media, perceives collaboration as a natural adaptation of da'wah to contemporary contexts. They value the relatability and creative presentation offered by influencers, while also appreciating the presence of ulama as guarantors of authenticity and accuracy in Islamic teachings. For many young Muslims, these partnerships bridge the gap between tradition and modernity, offering religious guidance that is both theologically sound and culturally relevant to their daily lives. The high engagement rates observed on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube illustrate how younger audiences are receptive to this form of da'wah.

By contrast, older generations including Generation X and Baby Boomers often approach such collaborations with caution. Many in this group maintain a preference for traditional da'wah methods, such as sermons in mosques, study circles (*majelis taklim*), or printed religious literature (Zamhari, 2010). While they may recognize the value of reaching younger audiences through digital platforms, some express concern that collaborations risk trivializing or oversimplifying sacred teachings for the sake of popularity. Skepticism also arises when influencers, who may lack formal religious training, are seen as occupying a platform parallel to that of the ulama. As a result, acceptance among older audiences tends to depend on the perceived sincerity of the influencer and the extent to which the ulama's authority remains clearly established.

Interestingly, the research findings also show that middle-generation Muslims, particularly educated urban professionals, occupy a mediating position (Dönmez-Colin, 2004). They generally appreciate innovation in da'wah methods while still holding strong respect for traditional religious authority. For this group, collaborations are most effective when they combine scholarly credibility with practical guidance relevant to work, family, and social life. This demographic values not only the message itself but also the balance between innovation and tradition that the partnership represents.

Generational acceptance of ulama-influencer collaborations is shaped by varying expectations of religious authority and media use (Brown, 2019). While younger Muslims welcome these partnerships as timely and effective, older generations remain cautious and sometimes critical, preferring conventional approaches. Middle generations, meanwhile, often see the potential for balance and adaptation. These insights suggest that successful collaborative da'wah must consider generational dynamics, ensuring that the partnership speaks across age groups without undermining either religious integrity or cultural relevance.

### **Recommendations for Structured Da'wah Management Strategies in the Digital Era**

The findings of this study highlight the need for a more structured and systematic approach to da'wah management in the digital era, particularly in the context of collaboration between ulama and Muslim influencers. First, it is essential to develop a formal framework of collaboration between ulama and influencers. This framework should clarify the roles and responsibilities of each party: ulama serving as the primary source of theological guidance, and influencers functioning as mediators who translate these messages into accessible, engaging formats. By institutionalizing collaboration whether through da'wah organizations, Islamic media councils, or online platforms potential conflicts regarding authority and content can be minimized.

Second, structured da'wah management requires the establishment of content guidelines and quality control mechanisms. These guidelines should ensure that da'wah messages remain aligned with Islamic teachings while adapting to the stylistic demands of digital platforms (A. M. Rahman, 2020). For instance, a joint review team consisting of scholars and media practitioners could assess the accuracy and appropriateness of content before publication. This would not only preserve the authenticity of Islamic teachings but also protect audiences from misinformation or overly simplified narratives.

Third, there is a need to invest in capacity building for both ulama and influencers. For ulama, training in digital communication and media literacy can enhance their ability to engage effectively in online environments without compromising scholarly integrity. For influencers, workshops in basic Islamic knowledge, ethical da'wah practices, and content responsibility can strengthen their credibility and prevent misuse of religious authority. This mutual empowerment ensures that collaboration is not only functional but also sustainable.

Fourth, da'wah management strategies should emphasize audience segmentation and platform optimization. Different groups such as urban youth, rural communities, or professional adults consume digital media differently. A structured strategy would involve tailoring messages to fit these diverse audiences, while also choosing the most effective platforms (e.g., short videos on TikTok for youth, long-form discussions on YouTube for professionals, and live sessions on Instagram for interactive engagement).

Fifth, collaborative da'wah initiatives must incorporate feedback and evaluation systems (Yoder, 2014). Regular assessment of audience responses through comments, surveys, or engagement analytics provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of campaigns. Feedback loops also allow both ulama and influencers to refine their approaches, address audience concerns, and maintain relevance in rapidly evolving digital cultures.

Lastly, structured da'wah management in the digital era should prioritize ethical standards and transparency. Clear communication about the purpose of collaborations, respect for audience privacy, and avoidance of commercial exploitation of religious messages are crucial for maintaining trust. A transparent approach not only enhances credibility but also safeguards the integrity of da'wah as a spiritual mission rather than a marketing tool.

In conclusion, structured da'wah management strategies in the digital age should combine clear frameworks, quality control, capacity building, audience-centered approaches, systematic evaluation, and ethical standards. By implementing these recommendations, the collaboration between ulama and Muslim influencers can move beyond temporary initiatives and evolve into a sustainable model of digital da'wah that is both authentic and impactful.

### **Challenges and Obstacles**

One of the most pressing challenges is the difference in style and authority between ulama and influencers. Ulama typically adopt a formal, scholarly, and text-based approach, grounded in centuries of religious tradition and jurisprudence (Ghanem, 2020). In contrast, influencers rely on casual, visual, and often entertainment-driven methods to capture audience attention. While these contrasting styles can be complementary, they may also lead to misunderstandings or tensions in collaboration. For instance, ulama may perceive the influencer's style as oversimplifying sacred teachings, while influencers may feel constrained by the rigidity of scholarly discourse.

Another obstacle is the risk of commercialization or dilution of religious messages. In digital platforms where monetization through advertising, sponsorships, and brand endorsements is common, there is a danger that da'wah content may be perceived as a tool for profit rather than sincere spiritual guidance. This risk is heightened when influencers integrate religious themes into their broader lifestyle branding, potentially reducing da'wah to a marketing strategy. Such perceptions can undermine the credibility of both ulama and influencers, especially among older or more conservative audiences (Ithram, 2009).

The collaboration also faces the potential conflict between traditional interpretations and popular content. Ulama are committed to preserving the integrity of Islamic teachings based on classical sources and methodologies, while influencers often prioritize audience appeal and trending topics. This divergence can lead to disagreements about which issues should be highlighted, how they should be presented, and to what extent simplification or adaptation is acceptable. In some cases, influencers may promote content that resonates strongly with audiences but raises theological concerns for scholars, thereby creating friction in the partnership.

Finally, public perception and criticism present an ongoing challenge. While younger audiences generally embrace these collaborations, certain segments of society particularly conservative groups express skepticism or disapproval. Critics often argue that involving influencers risks trivializing religious discourse or blurring the lines between entertainment and worship (Clarke, 2020). Social media also amplifies such criticism, with online debates and negative comments sometimes escalating into reputational risks for both ulama and influencers.

In summary, the effectiveness of collaborative da'wah management is constrained by challenges related to stylistic differences, risks of commercialization, conflicts over interpretation, and critical public perception. Addressing these obstacles requires deliberate strategies that safeguard theological integrity, maintain ethical standards, and balance the strengths of both traditional and modern approaches to religious communication.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research on the effectiveness of collaborative da'wah management between ulama and Muslim influencers carries substantial significance from academic, practical, and social perspectives (T. Rahman, 2016). From an academic standpoint, the study contributes to the growing body of literature in the fields of Islamic communication, religious studies, and digital da'wah management. It highlights how classical frameworks of religious leadership can be integrated with modern communication theories, such as the Two-Step Flow, Agenda Setting, and Uses and Gratifications. In doing so, the research not only advances theoretical understanding but also provides an empirical foundation for analyzing new forms of religious authority and influence in the digital era. This contribution is particularly relevant to scholars seeking to explore the intersection of theology, media, and social influence in Muslim societies.

From a practical perspective, the study offers clear benefits for Islamic organizations, pesantren, da'wah institutions, and individual influencers. By identifying effective strategies and challenges in collaboration, it provides a roadmap for developing structured and sustainable models of digital da'wah. Religious institutions can use the findings to strengthen partnerships with influencers, while influencers themselves can gain guidance on maintaining theological accuracy and ethical standards. This practical significance ensures that da'wah efforts remain both authentic and engaging, reaching diverse audiences without undermining Islamic principles.

Finally, the research has strong social significance in promoting Islamic literacy, tolerance, and positive religious engagement in society. In an era where online platforms can both spread knowledge and foster division, collaborative da'wah offers a model for delivering messages of compassion, inclusivity, and balance. By combining the authority of ulama with the accessibility of influencers, the study demonstrates how da'wah can address contemporary social issues, reduce misconceptions, and foster greater unity within the Muslim community. The broader impact of this significance lies in nurturing a society where Islamic values are not only preserved but also practiced in ways that are relevant and constructive in daily life (Sahin, 2018).

#### **Comparison with Previous Research**

The findings of this study, which highlight the effectiveness of collaborative da'wah management between ulama and Muslim influencers, both affirm and extend the insights of earlier research conducted in the last decade. Previous studies have generally emphasized either the role of ulama as traditional religious authorities or the influence of digital media personalities in shaping religious discourse. By examining their collaboration, the current research integrates these perspectives and contributes a more holistic understanding.

Several studies have shown the growing importance of digital media in Islamic communication. For example, Campbell and Tsuria (2021) argue that religious authority is increasingly negotiated in online spaces, where influencers often reshape religious narratives to fit the logic of social media. Similarly, Ahmad and Othman (2017) found that social media platforms are powerful tools for engaging Muslim youth, but the absence of traditional scholarly authority risks creating shallow or fragmented understandings of Islam. The current study confirms these concerns but also demonstrates that collaboration with ulama can mitigate them by ensuring both accuracy and engagement.

Other research has focused on the credibility gap between scholars and influencers. Abidin (2020) notes that audiences often struggle to reconcile the entertainment-driven styles of influencers with the solemnity of religious teachings. This study expands on that insight by showing how joint content production such as shared livestreams or co-branded videos helps resolve this gap, making messages more credible and accessible at the same time (Borges, 2009).

In addition, earlier studies such as Bunt (2018) highlighted the tension between traditional interpretations and popularized digital content. The present research echoes this tension, finding that differences in style and authority remain a challenge. However, it also adds nuance by showing that audiences, especially younger Muslims, view these collaborations positively when they perceive trust, authenticity, and content relevance. This suggests that the integration of tradition and modernity is not only possible but also increasingly necessary.

Finally, research by Anderson (2019) and Rahman & Jamil (2022) stressed the role of digital da'wah in shaping Muslim identity among youth. The current study supports these findings, showing that collaborative da'wah resonates strongly with urban Muslim youth who seek guidance that is both religiously grounded and practically applicable. However, it also identifies a generational divide: older audiences remain cautious and sometimes critical, a point less emphasized in earlier literature.

While previous studies have explored separately the influence of ulama and Muslim influencers, the current research demonstrates that their collaboration offers a complementary model that balances authority with relatability. Compared to earlier findings, this study suggests a more optimistic outlook on digital da'wah, provided that collaborations are managed with clear frameworks, ethical standards, and sensitivity to generational differences.

## CONCLUSION

This research has demonstrated that collaboration between ulama and Muslim influencers represents a powerful and necessary approach to da'wah in the digital era. The findings show that such partnerships significantly enhance the credibility, reach, and impact of Islamic messages, particularly among younger audiences who are highly active on social media platforms. By combining the scholarly authority of ulama with the digital communication skills and relatability of influencers, collaborative da'wah creates a balanced model that bridges the gap between traditional knowledge and modern lifestyles. The study identifies trust, authenticity, and content relevance as the central factors determining the effectiveness of these collaborations. Trust is gained through the credibility of ulama and the social connection established by influencers. Authenticity is maintained when both parties remain true to their roles while presenting messages sincerely. Content relevance ensures that da'wah remains connected to the real-life concerns of audiences, making Islamic teachings both practical and meaningful. However, the research also highlights several challenges and obstacles that must be addressed for collaboration to remain sustainable. Differences in style and authority, risks of commercialization, conflicts between traditional interpretations and popularized content, and public criticism all represent ongoing tensions. Without careful management, these challenges can undermine both the integrity and the effectiveness of da'wah efforts. The results further show that generational acceptance varies: younger Muslims enthusiastically embrace ulama influencer partnerships as innovative and relatable, while older generations remain more cautious and prefer conventional religious methods. This generational divide underscores the need for flexible strategies that accommodate different audience expectations without compromising theological integrity. In light of these findings, the research concludes that structured da'wah management strategies are essential in the digital era. Such strategies should include formal frameworks for collaboration, content guidelines, training for both ulama and influencers, audience segmentation, and continuous feedback mechanisms. By adopting these measures, Islamic organizations and digital practitioners can transform collaborations into sustainable models that preserve the authenticity of Islamic teachings while engaging effectively with contemporary society. Ultimately, this study affirms that collaborative da'wah between ulama and Muslim influencers is not merely a trend but a transformative model of religious communication. It provides an opportunity to strengthen Islamic literacy, promote tolerance, and foster positive engagement with religion in a rapidly changing digital world.

## AUTHORS' DECLARATION

### Authors' Contributions and Responsibilities

In the completion of this research, all authors shared significant responsibilities to ensure the integrity and quality of the study.

### Competing Interests

The authors declare that there are no competing interests that could have influenced the outcomes of this research. This study was conducted independently, without any financial, institutional, or personal relationships that could be perceived as potential sources of bias.

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