


# Digital Da'wah Transformation of *Nahdlatul Ulama*: Religious Moderation Strategies in the Technological Era


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## Abstract

*NU's classical da'wah method, dominated by lectures, is often seen as less relevant in the modern era. Meanwhile, other religious groups have adopted da'wah approaches that are more suited to contemporary society. Seeing these conditions, it is necessary to update NU's da'wah strategy that integrates digital technology and the internet to spread the message of religious moderation more effectively. This research uses the literature study method to develop a new understanding and approach to religious moderation through digital da'wah. The main focus is examining how NU can utilize easy internet and digital media access in its da'wah strategy. The results of the study contribute to providing concrete solutions for technology-based da'wah methods, particularly in spreading the values of religious moderation that suit the conditions of modern Islamic society.*

Metode dakwah klasik NU yang didominasi ceramah sering dipandang kurang relevan di era modern. Sementara itu, kelompok keagamaan lain telah mengadopsi pendekatan dakwah yang lebih sesuai dengan masyarakat kontemporer. Melihat kondisi tersebut, diperlukan pembaruan strategi dakwah NU yang mengintegrasikan teknologi digital dan internet untuk menyebarkan pesan moderasi beragama secara lebih efektif. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi pustaka untuk mengembangkan pemahaman dan pendekatan baru dalam moderasi beragama melalui dakwah digital. Fokus utamanya adalah mengkaji bagaimana NU dapat memanfaatkan kemudahan akses internet dan media digital dalam strategi dakwahnya. Hasil penelitian berkontribusi dalam memberikan solusi konkret untuk metode dakwah berbasis teknologi, khususnya dalam menyebarkan nilai-nilai moderasi beragama yang sesuai dengan kondisi masyarakat Islam modern.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the development of information and communication technology has changed the way Islamic da'wah is conducted, including by *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU).<sup>1</sup> As one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, NU has adapted to these changes through digital da'wah transformation.<sup>2</sup> This transformation aims to expand the reach of da'wah and promote religious moderation in an increasingly culturally and religiously diverse society.<sup>3</sup> By utilizing social media and other digital platforms, NU seeks to spread moderate Islamic messages, reaching a wider audience, especially the younger generation who are more active in the digital world.

However, the digital era also brings new challenges such as the spread of fake news and radicalism through social media. Research on NU's adaptation to digital media da'wah has been conducted by Setia, P.<sup>4</sup> and Hidayat, N.<sup>5</sup> but the research is still global in discussing the adaptation of digital media as a new means, so that through this research, specificity is conveyed in the form of implementing religious moderation da'wah strategies in the technological era through digital media. Therefore, this research formulates several main problems. Such as, how NU transforms da'wah through digital platforms, what strategies are applied to promote religious moderation, as well as the challenges and opportunities faced in the implementation of this digital da'wah. In addition, this research also questions the extent of the effectiveness of NU's digital da'wah in encouraging interfaith dialog and the role of digital literacy in supporting this strategy.

The purpose of this study is to analyze and understand the digital da'wah transformation strategy undertaken by *Nahdlatul Ulama* in promoting

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<sup>1</sup> Fridi Yanto, M Kholis Amrullah, and Muhammad Rafi'i, "Digitalisasi Nahdlatul Ulama: Dari Laku Tradisional Menuju Revolusi Digital," 2020, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:218930014>.

<sup>2</sup> Nurul Rifqah et al., "Dinamika Dakwah Islam Dalam Menghadapi Tantangan Di Era Digital: Perspektif Nahdlatul Ulama Dan Muhammadiyah," *AT-TAWASUL*, 2024, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:272588350>.

<sup>3</sup> Hesty Putri Utami, "Dakwah Digital Nahdlatul Ulama Dalam Memahami Nilai-Nilai Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah," *MEDIAKITA*, 2020, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:230543689>.

<sup>4</sup> Paelani Setia and Asep Muhamad Iqbal, "Adaptasi Media Sosial Oleh Organisasi Keagamaan Di Indonesia: Studi Kanal YouTube Nahdlatul Ulama, NU Channel," *JISPO Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik* 11, no. 2 (2021): 359–78.

<sup>5</sup> Nurul Hidayat, "Tantangan Dakwah NU Di Era Digital Dan Disrupsi Teknologi," *J-KIs: Jurnal Komunikasi Islam* 5, no. 1 (2024): 45–54.

religious moderation in the technological era.<sup>6</sup> This research also aims to explore the challenges and opportunities that arise from using digital platforms in da'wah activities as well as assess the effectiveness of this approach in reaching a wider audience.<sup>7</sup> As such, this research is expected to provide insight into how religious organizations can adapt to technological changes while still maintaining their core values.

The benefits of this research include theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this research can enrich the literature on da'wah transformation in the digital era and religious moderation strategies.<sup>8</sup> Practically, the results of this research can serve as a guide for other religious organizations in developing effective digital da'wah strategies. In addition, this research can also help improve digital literacy among the public to be wiser in filtering religious information in the technological era.

### Method

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type, which aims to deeply understand the phenomenon of digital da'wah transformation by *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) in promoting religious moderation in the technological era. The subjects of this research are NU digital da'wah activists, including administrators and members involved in creating and dissemination da'wah content through digital platforms. The research object includes various forms of digital media used by NU, such as social media, websites, and podcasts as a means of da'wah. Data collection techniques were carried out through literature studies to enrich understanding of the context and challenges of digital da'wah in Indonesia. The collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, which allows researchers to identify patterns and main themes in NU's digital da'wah strategy. The analysis process began by grouping the information thematically, such as social media usage, religious moderation approach, and challenges in digital da'wah implementation. Subsequently, these themes were further analyzed to understand the relationship between themes and how they contribute to NU's da'wah objectives. Through this methodological approach, this research can provide a comprehensive picture of how *Nahdlatul Ulama* utilizes digital technology to

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<sup>6</sup> Paelani Setia and Rahimin Affandi Abd. Rahim, "The Nahdlatul Ulama's Contribution to Peacemaking in A Digital Era," *Hanifiya: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama*, 2024, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:270495460>.

<sup>7</sup> Samsul Rani, "Transformasi Komunikasi Dakwah Dalam Era Digital: Peluang Dan Tantangan Dalam Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer," *AL-MIKRAJ Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora (E-ISSN 2745-4584)*, 2023, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:265751460>.

<sup>8</sup> Rifqah et al., "Dinamika Dakwah Islam Dalam Menghadapi Tantangan Di Era Digital: Perspektif Nahdlatul Ulama Dan Muhammadiyah."

spread the message of religious moderation, as well as the challenges and opportunities faced in the process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### NU and Classic Da'wah Strategy

*Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) is one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia that has a long history in the development of the nation. NU was founded in 1926 in Surabaya by pesantren scholars as a response to the national awakening and the struggle against colonialism.<sup>9</sup> Prior to the establishment of NU, pesantren scholars had formed several movement organizations, such as *Nahdlatul Wathan* (Awakening of the Fatherland) in 1916, *Taswirul Afkar* or *Nahdlatul Fikri* (Awakening of Thought) in 1918, and *Nahdlatul Tujjar* (Awakening of Traders) which aimed to improve the people's economy and fight colonial economic domination.<sup>10</sup> NU then developed into an organization that plays an important role in maintaining Islamic traditions and culture in Indonesia, and has various autonomous bodies that function to help implement NU policies, especially those related to disadvantaged communities. In the process, NU has a long history of carrying out da'wah. NU's da'wah strategy, starting from the classical period, has its own characteristics, which have proven effective in spreading the teachings of Islam in Indonesian society. Among the widely known da'wah strategies, there are several important aspects of NU's classic da'wah strategy, including the following;

#### a. Cultural Approach

NU is widely known for its cultural da'wah approach that accommodates local culture without compromising the values of Islamic principles.<sup>11</sup> This strategy has a strong historical foundation, inspired by the *Walisongo* da'wah method in the 15th and 16th centuries in Indonesia, starting with *Sunan Kudus* who forbade slaughtering cows because he respected the culture of the Kudus people who at that time believed in cows as gods,<sup>12</sup> this applies a cultural approach in the form of norms and rules, then *Sunan Kalijaga* also made the object of *wayang kulit* art which was widely favored by the Demak people into a

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<sup>9</sup> Miftahul Ulum and Abd Wahid, "Fikih Organisasi (Reaktualisasi Sejarah Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Di Indonesia)," *Al-Insyiroh: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, 2019, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35309/alinsyiroh.v5i2.3517>.

<sup>10</sup> Fatkhul Mubin, "Sejarah Dan Kiprah Nahdlatul Ulama Di Indonesia," 2020, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:243743592>.

<sup>11</sup> Afidatul Asmar, "Genealogi Dan Strategi Dakwah Kultural NU," *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, 2018, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:240278671>.

<sup>12</sup> Uswatun Hasanah, "Respon Masyarakat Kudus Terhadap Strategi Dakwah Sunan Kudus" (IAIN SALATIGA, 2019).

da'wah strategy with a cultural approach in the form of material works.<sup>13</sup> The purpose of the cultural approach is to apply values substantively, not just normatively, namely through a cultural approach rather than a structural approach.

This cultural approach continues to develop as a da'wah strategy until modern times or the era of information technology. Especially by NU in Indonesia, this da'wah strategy is still widely used, one example of NU's da'wah with a cultural approach in the modern era is through modern Islamic boarding schools. NU modern boarding school integrate Islamic religious education with contemporary science and technology, while still maintaining traditional values and local culture. This approach aims to prepare human resources who are not only pious and noble, but also reliable and professional in facing the complexity of global problems.<sup>14</sup> For example, NU modern boarding schools implement a curriculum that combines aspects of science and piety (IMTAK) with science and technology (IPTEK). This approach allows students to adapt to the surrounding environment and answer the challenges of the times, while still maintaining Islamic values. Thus, the educational output of NU modern boarding schools is expected to be a promising opportunity and hope for the future of mankind, as well as being able to contribute positively to the development of socio-cultural and religious life in society.

#### *b. Use of Local Language and Culture*

The use of local Javanese language and culture is one of the classic da'wah strategies effectively used by NU in spreading Islamic in the community. This approach allows the da'wah message to be more easily accepted and understood by the audience. An example of its application can be seen from the use of Javanese language in the rubric "*Lha Kiyeh*" in *Berita Berhias* magazine, where a Tegal culturalist, Atmo Tan Sidik, uses Tegal language to convey advice and local wisdom.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Asmar, "Genealogi Dan Strategi Dakwah Kultural NU."

<sup>14</sup> Dilma Finisa Anggriana, "Pondok Pesantren Modern di Kendal," 2010, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:187571238>.

<sup>15</sup> imam Chumedi Nim, "Bahasa Lokal sebagai Metode Dakwah (Analisis Terhadap Rubrik Lha Kiyeh Majalah Berita Berhias)" (UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2009).

Picture 1. Book of Tafsir in Javanese



Source: <https://www.kanglatif.com/2016/03/tafsir-faidlur-rohman-simbah-kiai.html>

In addition, the use of local language in da'wah can also be seen from the works of KH. Sholeh Darat who wrote in Javanese with Arabic *Pegon* writing, made it easier for people to understand the teachings of Islam while avoiding the suspicion of colonizers.<sup>16</sup> This da'wah strategy that acculturates Javanese culture and Islam has proven effective in spreading the teachings of Islamic in Java.

### c. Bil Lisan Strategy and Cadre

The *bil lisan* (lectures) and cadre strategies are two main approaches in NU's da'wah strategy that have proven effective in fostering the social religious behavior of its congregations. The *bil lisan* method involves delivering da'wah message through lectures or speeches, which are often adapted to the local context to facilitate audience understanding. For example, the use of local languages such as Javanese or Madurese in lectures to reach out to local communities. Meanwhile, the cadre strategy aims to prepare the next generation who will continue NU's mission of da'wah. NU organizes various cadre development programs, such as the *Nahdlatul Ulama* Movement Cadre

<sup>16</sup> Ali Mas'ud, "Pemikiran Tasawuf KH. Saleh Darat Al-Samarani: Maha Guru Para Ulama Nusantara," 2018, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:217239802>.

Education (PKPNU) and the Da'wah Cadre Training (PKD).<sup>17</sup> These programs aim to prepare the next generation who understand and can continue NU's da'wah strategy. Both methods are implemented through various activities such as routine recitation, majelis taklim, and cadre training programs. The effectiveness of this strategy can be seen from the increase in the socio-religious behavior of NU worshipers, which can generally be said to be quite good after participating in various organized da'wah activities.<sup>18</sup>

*d. Utilization of Traditional Media*

The use of traditional media is still an important part of NU's classic da'wah strategy, although this organization has also adopted modern media in disseminating its religious messages. Traditional media such as regular recitations, seminars, and Friday sermons still play a significant role, especially in reaching people in areas that have not been fully exposed to modern technology. One example of the effectiveness of traditional media is the use of *nadham* (Arabic or regional poetry) in the recitation at *Majlis Taklim*. The *nadham* is hummed together by the congregation, then the content is explained by the ustadz or *kyai*. This method has proven effective in conveying religious messages because it is easily remembered and understood by the congregation.<sup>19</sup> The Friday sermon is also a traditional da'wah medium that is still relevant. In some areas, such as in Cilangari Village, Bojongkoneng Village, Ngamprah District, the Friday sermon is delivered in Sundanese as an effort to preserve the local language while facilitating the congregation's understanding of the da'wah message.<sup>20</sup>

The classic NU da'wah strategy has proven effective in spreading moderate and tolerant Islam in Indonesia. By combining cultural approaches, the use of local languages, and traditional methods, NU has managed to maintain its relevance in a changing society.

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<sup>17</sup> Ade Nurwahyudi, "Strategi Dakwah Nahdlatul Ulama Dan Muhammadiyah Dalam Menangkal Radikalisme Di Kabupaten Bondowoso," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Communication*, 2021, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:234209107>.

<sup>18</sup> masa Hikmad, "Strategi Dakwah Majelis Wakil Cabang Nahdlatul Ulama'(Mwc Nu) Kaliwungu Kendal," n.d.

<sup>19</sup> Chintia Dunnuroeni, "Nadham Sebagai Media Tabligh: Studi Deskriptif Pengajian Di Majelis Taklim Pagelaran III Desa Gardusayang Kec Cisalak Kab Subang" (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Eka Kurnia Firmansyah and Nurina Dyah Putrisari, "Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Kampung Cilangari Desa Bojongkoneng Kecamatan Ngamprah Dalam Upaya Melestarikan Bahasa Sunda Melalui Pengajian Rutin Ibu-Ibu Dan Khutbah Jumat," *Dharmakarya*, 2020, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:225731919>.

### **Transformation of the Da'wah of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in the Digital Age**

In following the times that are always developing, NU as an Islamic organization and da'wah must certainly follow the transformation of da'wah patterns through digital media that are rife among the community. By following the forms of information dissemination and by following technological developments, NU can finally continue its goal of Islamic da'wah to the community. NU has adopted various forms of digital da'wah to spread Islamic teachings and *Ahlussunah Wal Jama'ah An-Nahdliyah* values. Here are some forms of digital da'wah carried out by NU:

#### *a. Social Media*

Nowadays, social media has become a trend in all circles. Ease access to the internet and sophisticated technological developments make social media the most popular access in sharing and receiving information.<sup>21</sup> NU adopts the method of da'wah with social media aggressively, starting from the Instagram platform, NU actively uses the Instagram account @nuonline\_id to spread da'wah messages. The content presented includes quotations from the Qur'an, hadith, current news, and health information. This content is packaged creatively and innovatively to attract audience attention.<sup>22</sup> In addition to Instagram, NU also utilizes several platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube to reach a wider audience. They also launched the podcast program "Jagat Dakwah NU" as part of their digital da'wah strategy.<sup>23</sup>

#### *b. Video and Podcast Content*

NU utilizes video content as one of the main tools in its digital da'wah. The videos produced include religious lectures, panel discussions on religious issues, as well as discussions on social topics relevant to Islamic teachings. The video content is designed to appeal to a younger audience that is familiar with visual formats. By using platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, NU can reach a wider and more diverse audience, delivering religious messages in an

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<sup>21</sup> Resti Fauzul Muna and Tri Puji Astuti, "Hubungan Antara Kontrol Diri Dengan Kecenderungan Kecanduan Media Sosial Pada Remaja Akhir," *Jurnal Empati* 3, no. 4 (2014): 481–91.

<sup>22</sup> Nadiyah Muthoharoh, Bambang Saiful Ma'arif, and Asep Ahmad Siddiq, "Metode Dakwah Nahdlatul Ulama Dalam Konten Akun Instagram NU Online Id," *Bandung Conference Series: Islamic Broadcast Communication*, 2023, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:261195851>.

<sup>23</sup> Rifqah et al., "Dinamika Dakwah Islam Dalam Menghadapi Tantangan Di Era Digital: Perspektif Nahdlatul Ulama Dan Muhammadiyah."

effective and engaging manner.<sup>24</sup> In addition to video, podcasts are also an important medium in NU's digital da'wah strategy. Podcasts offer flexibility for listeners to access religious content anytime and anywhere, in accordance with the fast-paced modern lifestyle. In podcasts, NU presents in-depth discussions on Islamic teachings, interviews with religious figures, and discussion of contemporary issues from a moderate Islamic perspective. Through podcasts, NU can reach a wider audience and provide a deeper understanding of the importance of moderation in religion.<sup>25</sup> With the combination of videos and podcasts, NU has successfully utilized digital technology to spread da'wah more effectively and relevantly in this digital era.

**Picture 2.** NU Online Podcast



Source: <https://youtu.be/VwJLrNzSIpQ?si=AKMoj8mAn8uGw7Q8>

#### *d. Websites and Online Portals*

NU manages websites such as NU Online which serves as a portal for religious information and news for Muslims. The site provides in-depth articles on Islamic teachings as well as the latest news from the Islamic world. Through this platform, NU seeks to spread the narrative of "*Islam Nusantara*," which emphasizes a moderate and contextual approach to Islam in accordance with Indonesian culture. The content presented includes Qur'anic commentaries,

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<sup>24</sup> Rifqah et al.

<sup>25</sup> Said Ulin Nuhaa et al., "Pengembangan Dakwah Moderasi Beragama Melalui Media Podcast Dan Media Sosial Berbasis Digital," *NAJWA: Jurnal Pengabdian Dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*, 2023, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:267454393>.



understanding social media algorithms to maximize the reach of da'wah.<sup>28</sup> In addition, NU also pays special attention to effective content creation skills. In the context of digital da'wah, engaging and relevant content is key to delivering Islamic messages effectively. Therefore, NU encourages its members to produce content that is not only informative but also creative and innovative. This includes the creation of short videos, infographics and articles that can appeal to a younger, tech-savvy audience. In doing so, NU seeks to ensure that religious messages can be conveyed in a way that is appropriate and well-received by the wider community.<sup>29</sup>

Through these various forms of digital da'wah, NU is trying to answer the challenges of the digital era in an innovative and effective way, ensuring that Islamic messages can be received by the wider community in a way that is relevant to the times.

### **NU's Religious Moderation Strategy through Digital Da'wah**

The main step that always guides NU in preaching moderation is to always strengthen the values of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* into its teachings. *Nahdlatul Ulama* consistently implements a strategy to strengthen the values of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* (Aswaja) through various digital platforms. *Nahdlatul Ulama* develops a religious moderation approach based on the values of *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawasuth* (moderation), and *tawazun* (balance). This approach is an important foundation in dealing with various extreme ideologies and radical movements that have emerged in society. Through the trilogy of *ukhuwah* that includes aspects of Islam, humanity, and nationality, NU plays an active role in internalizing the understanding of *wasathiyah* (moderation) that is integrated with the spirit of nationalism.<sup>30</sup> This approach is translated into digital content that is easily understood by millennials and *Gen-Z*. NU develops mobile applications, podcasts, and YouTube channels that present in-depth studies of *Aswaja*. NU clerics and scholars also actively give virtual lectures and hold online discussions to answer various contemporary religious issues with a moderate approach.<sup>31</sup>

Islam *Nusantara* as a manifestation of Islam with Indonesian characteristics has gained new momentum in the digital era. NU develops

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<sup>28</sup> Imam Tahyudin et al., "Pelatihan Video Editing Dan Pembuatan Konten Digital PCINU Jepang Sebagai Media Dakwah," *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Progresif Humanis Brainstorming*, 2023, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:268685352>.

<sup>29</sup> Rifqah et al., "Dinamika Dakwah Islam Dalam Menghadapi Tantangan Di Era Digital: Perspektif Nahdlatul Ulama Dan Muhammadiyah."

<sup>30</sup> Hidayat, "Tantangan Dakwah NU Di Era Digital Dan Disrupsi Teknologi."

<sup>31</sup> Hidayat.

various digital da'wah programs that emphasize the values of locality and cultural wisdom. Through streaming platforms such as Netflix and YouTube, NU produces documentaries and series that raise inspiring stories about the harmonization of Islam with local culture.<sup>32</sup> These programs not only reach domestic but also international audiences, introducing the Indonesian model of moderate Islam to the global world. In terms of content, NU presents in-depth studies on the history of the entry of Islam into the archipelago, the role of the *Walisongo*, and various local Islamic traditions that have taken root in society. NU's social media platform also regularly uploads content on religious practices that combine Islamic values with local wisdom, such as the tradition of *tahlilan*, *maulid nabi*, and grave pilgrimage.<sup>33</sup> To strengthen the narrative of Islam *Nusantara*, NU involves academics, cultural experts, and community leaders in producing quality digital content.

In facing the challenges of radicalism and extremism in cyberspace, NU has developed a comprehensive counter-narrative strategy. NU's cyber team actively monitors and analyzes the development of extremist content on social media, then develops counter content that promotes moderate Islam. NU also established a network of Muslim influencers and content creators who are committed to spreading messages of religious moderation through their digital platforms. NU's counter-narrative strategy does not only focus on the content aspect, but also builds a digital ecosystem that supports religious moderation.<sup>34</sup> NU develops an e-learning platform that provides moderate Islamic materials, holds webinars and online discussions on contemporary issues, and builds digital communities that promote the values of tolerance and peace. Collaboration with various stakeholders, including the government and social media platforms, is also carried out to stem the spread of extremist content. NU also uses a digital storytelling approach to present real-life stories about the negative impact of radicalism and extremism. Through podcasts, documentary videos and digital articles, NU presents testimonials from former members of extremist groups who have returned to the path of moderation. This digital deradicalization program has proven effective in preventing the spread of radicalism among the younger generation.<sup>35</sup> In addition, NU is also actively

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<sup>32</sup> Ghulam, Farid, and Ghofur, "Da'wah 'Islam Nusantara' on NU Online and the Surrounding Argue."

<sup>33</sup> Mukodi Mukodi, "Revitalisasi Islam Nusantara Di Era Digital: Antara Harapan Dan Kenyataan," 2020, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:234737013>.

<sup>34</sup> Ali Ridho et al., "Nahdlatul Ulama as The Main Actor Managing and Resetting Civilization in The Digital Era," *Ath-Thariq: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi*, 2023, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:266445763>.

<sup>35</sup> Ridho et al.

developing a digital literacy program to improve people's ability to identify and reject extremist content on social media.

### **Challenges and Opportunities for NU Digital Da'wah**

Digital da'wah has become one of the important strategies for NU in spreading the message of Islam in the modern era. With the advancement of information technology, NU faces significant challenges and opportunities.

One of the main challenges NU faces in digital da'wah is the spread of unverified information. Amidst the rise of hoax news and radical content on social media, NU needs to ensure that the messages it delivers are accurate and in line with moderate Islamic values. In addition, competition with da'wah content from other groups, such as *salafi* preachers who are superior in terms of number of followers and interactions on platforms such as YouTube, requires NU to be more innovative and creative in presenting da'wah content.<sup>36</sup> The competence of preachers in using technology is also an important factor. Many NU preachers have not fully utilized digital platforms effectively, so there is a need for training and capacity building to face this challenge. The method of delivering da'wah content must also be considered in order to appeal to a diverse audience.<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, the digital era provides many opportunities for NU to expand its da'wah reach. By using social media such as Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, NU can reach a wider and more diverse audience. For example, NU's official Instagram account (@nuonline\_id) has attracted more than 1 million followers with creative and informative content, ranging from Qur'anic quotes to the latest news.<sup>38</sup> Collaboration between ulama and information technology experts is also key in capitalizing on this opportunity. By developing content that is engaging and relevant to the current situation, NU can deliver messages of peaceful and moderate Islam to the wider community. Innovation in message delivery through podcasts, short videos and other interactive content can increase audience engagement.<sup>39</sup>

In maximizing the potential of NU da'wah in cyberspace, the main foundation is digital literacy. Increasing this literacy is very important so that ulama and *santri* not only master religious knowledge, but are also able to use

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<sup>36</sup> Rifqah et al., "Dinamika Dakwah Islam Dalam Menghadapi Tantangan Di Era Digital: Perspektif Nahdlatul Ulama Dan Muhammadiyah."

<sup>37</sup> Hidayat, "Tantangan Dakwah NU Di Era Digital Dan Disrupsi Teknologi."

<sup>38</sup> Zulfikar Ikrom and Muhammad Fauzan Nugraha, "Literasi Dakwah Digital Pada Akun Media Sosial Instagram Nahdlatul Ulama @nuonline\\_id," *Meyarsa: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi Dan Dakwah*, 2024, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:272007565>.

<sup>39</sup> Hidayat, "Tantangan Dakwah NU Di Era Digital Dan Disrupsi Teknologi."

information technology properly. Information technology training in *pesantren*, such as that conducted at Raudhatul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School, shows that *santri* who are skilled in the use of digital devices can be more effective in disseminating religious knowledge and contributing to society. Thus, digital literacy not only improves individual capabilities, but also strengthens NU's position as the main actor in spreading moderate and inclusive Islamic values.<sup>40</sup>

Through the formation of digital literacy, digital space is indispensable in becoming a facility. Digital space is currently filled with various religious narratives, which often contradict each other. In this context, NU faces the challenge of creating a constructive and moderate narratives amidst the rapid and sometimes misleading flow of information. This competition involves not only the delivery of information, but also the influence on how people view religion. Therefore, it is important for NU to utilize social media platforms effectively to disseminate positive messages and respond wisely to sensitive issues. This can be done through collaboration with influential figures on social media to reach a wider audience.<sup>41</sup>

The transition from traditional to digital da'wah methods requires careful adaptation to remain relevant to the times. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many religious ritual practices have shifted to digital platforms, showing that da'wah can be done effectively without having to meet face-to-face. NU needs to develop new methodologies that integrate traditional elements with modern technology. For example, online lectures, interactive discussions through video conferencing applications, and the use of social media to share da'wah content can be attractive alternatives for the younger generation. In this way, da'wah can not only reach more people but also create virtual communities that are active in discussion and learning.<sup>42</sup>

## CONCLUSION

*Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) is one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, founded in 1926 by *pesantren* scholars as a response to national awakening and colonialism. NU developed effective classical da'wah strategies, including a cultural approaches that accommodates local culture, the use of local language

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<sup>40</sup> Cinantya Paramita et al., "Menavigasi Dunia Digital Dengan Meningkatkan Literasi Office, TI, Dan Internet Di Kalangan Siswa-Siswi Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Qur'an," *ABDIMASKU: JURNAL PENGABDIAN MASYARAKAT*, 2023, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:259774068>.

<sup>41</sup> Ridho et al., "Nahdlatul Ulama as The Main Actor Managing and Resetting Civilization in The Digital Era."

<sup>42</sup> Didy Ika Supryadi and Luluk Fadliyanti, "Dari Tradisional Ke Digital: Pemasaran Film Dan Tantangan Konsumsi," *Journal of Economics and Business* 6 (2020): 58–66, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:228856944>.

and culture to facilitate the understanding of Islamic teachings, as well as the *bil lisan* and *cadre* methods to foster the social religious behavior of the congregation. In addition, NU also utilizes traditional media such as recitation and Friday sermons to reach people who have not been exposed to modern technology. NU implements a strategy of religious moderation through digital da'wah by strengthening the values of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* (Aswaja) and the approaches of *tasamuh*, *tawasuth*, and *tawazun* to deal with extreme ideologies and radical movements. NU utilizes digital platforms such as mobile apps, podcasts, and YouTube to present in-depth content on *Aswaja* and conduct virtual lectures by *kyai*'s.

In the context of Islam Nusantara, NU introduced a moderate model of Islam rooted in local culture through documentary films and social media content depicting traditional religious practices. To counter radicalism in cyberspace, NU developed a counter-narrative strategies by producing moderate content, building influencers network, and organizing e-learning programs and webinars. In addition, NU also focuses on digital literacy to help people recognize and reject extremist content, and uses digital storytelling to tell the negative impact of radicalism.

Digital da'wah is an important strategy for NU in spreading the message of Islam in the modern era, despite facing challenges such as the spread of unverified information, competition with da'wah content from other groups, and the lack of competence of preachers in utilizing technology. NU needs to ensure the accuracy of the messages delivered and improve digital literacy among ulama and *santri* through information technology training. On the other hand, the digital era also offers opportunities to expand the reach of da'wah through social media and collaboration with technology experts, as well as innovation in the delivery of engaging content. By adapting traditional da'wah methods to digital platforms, NU can reach a wider audience and create an active virtual community, while still delivering a moderate and constructive religious narrative amidst the rapid flow of information. However, in practice, the media of interest to consumers in general is certainly different and will also be affected by the required content, so adjustments are needed so that the da'wah target can be fully conveyed. Thus, there needs to be a continuous survey to maintain the stability of da'wah content so that it remains attractive and can be an influence for consumers.

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