

# Islamic Feminism and the Da'wah of Islamic Boarding School Women on Social Media

Sitta Channa Pratiwi<sup>\*1</sup>, Singgih Muflihahafiz Labibah<sup>\*2</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya

e-mail: [channapратиwi@gmail.com](mailto:channapратиwi@gmail.com) [Singgihmuflihahafiz05@gmail.com](mailto:Singgihmuflihahafiz05@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT.** This study analyzes the digital da'wah practices of women in Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, highlighting how religious authority and narratives of Islamic feminism are constructed through social media. The approach is a media analysis from an Islamic feminist perspective, focusing on Ning Uswah Syauqi as a representative of the new generation of female Islamic boarding-school preachers. The results show that women's digital da'wah not only changes the form of religious communication but also restructures the epistemic structure of Islamic authority. Through empathetic, reflective, and participatory communication strategies, female preachers can harmoniously integrate the values of Islamic boarding-school piety with the principle of gender equality. The Islamic feminism articulated is contextual rather than confrontational, thereby fostering a collaborative and inclusive da'wah discourse. Social media functions as an emancipatory and epistemic space for women to produce religious knowledge and expand access to gender-just interpretations of Islam. Thus, women's digital da'wah in Islamic boarding schools represents a humanist, egalitarian, and socially just face of Islam in the technological era.

**Keywords:** *Digital da'wah, Islamic boarding schools, Islamic feminism, empathetic communication, gender equality.*

## INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of Islamic da'wah in Indonesia over the last two decades has undergone a significant transformation from a normative orientation to a social praxis that is more contextual and responsive to humanitarian issues, including gender equality. Da'wah, which was initially understood as the mere delivery of moral teachings, has now become an instrument of social change (Adisaputro & Sutamaji, 2021). One of the prominent aspects of this development is the emergence of a feminist narrative in the da'wah of Islamic boarding schools, which seeks to affirm women's role as active subjects in religious interpretation and Islamic-based social advocacy. This phenomenon is interesting because it takes place in the context of a spiritual society that is still colored by patriarchal bias and social structures that tend to limit women's space for movement. In this context, Ning Uswah Syauqi is

one of the young female preachers who emerged from the tradition of Islamic boarding schools with an inclusive, reflective, and supportive da'wah style that favors women's empowerment. Her da'wah is not only to convey moral advice but also to open a space for critical dialogue on gender issues, the role of the domestic-public sphere, and the interpretation of justice in Islam (Afirda & Nasution, 2025). This approach marks a paradigm shift in da'wah from a top-down model to a participatory approach that prioritizes women's experience and social awareness. This aligns with the concept of transformative da'wah, which emphasizes the ritual dimension and fosters a critical understanding of the social inequalities that oppress women (Azra, 2021).

Indonesia, as a country with the world's largest Muslim population, has a vibrant da'wah movement. Historically, Islamic da'wah in Indonesia has been primarily shaped by the role of male scholars, who occupy a central position in religious authority. However, over the last two decades, the emergence of women preachers (*muballighah*) has become a significant phenomenon, particularly in the *pesantren* environment. This role not only marks women's involvement in the religious sphere but also symbolizes resistance to patriarchal domination in Islamic interpretation and practice (Kodir, 2019). In East Java, Islamic boarding schools, the role of the *nyai*, or the *kiai*'s wife, has long been an important figure in moral and spiritual education. They have the authority to guide female students and develop a more gender-friendly Islamic perspective (Syafi'i, 2018). Rahmawati's (2020) study at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya shows that *Nyai* not only serves as a teacher of the yellow book but also as an agent of social change, strengthening gender awareness grounded in moderate Islamic values (Rahmawati). This da'wah approach that raises the issue of gender justice is supported by the spirit of Islam, *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which upholds humanity and equality. Islam, in the view of Muslim feminists such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas, emphasizes that the monotheistic message contains egalitarian principles, namely, the recognition of the equality of all human beings before God (Wadud, 1999). This principle was then adapted by Indonesian women preachers, such as Ning Uswah Syauqi, to reinforce the narrative of local Islamic feminism, a form of feminism born of the Indonesian socio-religious context rather than the wholesale adoption of Western ideology.

Islamic feminism in Indonesia developed as a response to two significant challenges: patriarchal bias in religious interpretation and resistance to Western feminism that was considered secular. Islamic boarding school women preachers seek to reinterpret religious texts, such as verses on leadership, domestic roles, and women's rights, to make them more contextually relevant to modern social realities (Barlas, 2002). This effort is called contextual interpretation based on women's experience, in which the meaning of religion is no longer the monopoly of male

scholars but the result of a dialogue among texts, contexts, and life experiences (Hidayati, 2021). In the Muslim feminist view, this reinterpretation is a form of intellectual jihad to uphold gender justice without stripping away Islamic values. This kind of approach is also in line with the inclusive hermeneutic paradigm developed among pesantren academics, such as Nur Rofiah and Sinta Nuriyah Wahid, who affirm that religious texts must be read in the spirit of *maqashid al-shari'ah* i.e., the protection of human dignity (*hifz al-nafs, hifz al-din, and hifz al-'irdh*)(Rofiah, 2020). In the context of *da'wah* praxis, Ning Uswah Syauqi combines the religious authority of Islamic boarding schools with the social sensibilities of Islamic feminism. She employs a reflective-participatory *da'wah* approach, in which lectures serve as a space for discussing women's experiences. Students and pilgrims are given space to convey the problems they face, ranging from the inequality of domestic roles and double burdens to symbolic violence in the family and society. Through this approach, *da'wah* is no longer indoctrinatory but becomes an arena of social dialogue that fosters critical awareness (Ismah, 2019). In her lectures, Ning Uswah often emphasized the importance of women's education and rejected the view that women should always occupy subordinate positions. For him, Islam glorifies women as subjects who have intellectual and spiritual potential equal to men. This kind of *da'wah* strengthens egalitarian theology, which is rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an, for example, in QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13, which affirms that a person's glory is determined by his piety, not his gender (Shihab, 2019).

The digital era opens up a new space for women preachers to expand their *da'wah* reach. Social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok are important for spreading *da'wah* messages that are more adaptable to the younger generation. A study by M. Fahmi (2022) in the *Journal of Da'wah and Communication* found that the digitization of women's *da'wah* increases religious literacy and gender awareness among Muslim adolescents (Fahmi, 2022). Ning Uswah Syauqi is one of a generation of preachers who use digital space to spread the idea of contextual Islamic feminism. Through her *da'wah* content, she prioritizes equality, social empathy, and women's moral responsibility as agents of change. This approach shows how *da'wah* can serve as a means of public education to combat gender bias and symbolic violence that persist in society (Biru & Arifin, 2025). The study of the narrative of feminism in the *da'wah* of Islamic boarding school women, especially figures such as Ning Uswah Syauqi, has theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on Indonesian Islamic feminism, which remains relatively limited in the context of pesantren-based *da'wah*. Most studies of Islamic feminism in Indonesia focus more on academic movements and the advocacy of non-governmental organizations, while the dimension of cultural *da'wah* has received little attention (Suryadi, 2007). In practice, this study confirms that women's *da'wah* makes a real contribution to the development of

gender awareness and the reconstruction of inclusive Islamic values. This kind of da'wah can change the way people view women, from the object of da'wah to an active subject that contributes to building a just and equal social order. This is in line with the vision of Islam as a religion of grace and social justice, as affirmed by Quraish Shihab in the concept of Moderate Islam, which rejects the extremism of interpretation and encourages a balance between text and context (Shihab, 2019).

Thus, the research on the narrative of feminism in da'wah Ning Uswah Syauqi not only offers a phenomenological description but also a theoretical analysis of how da'wah can serve as a medium of social transformation grounded in Islamic values. Through a transformative da'wah approach, women preachers such as Ning Uswah show that the struggle for gender equality does not have to be contrary to religious teachings, but rather is a manifestation of the universal Islamic values of justice ('adl) and humanity (insaniyyah).

## **METHOD**

This study uses an interpretive qualitative approach with a media analysis method from the perspective of Islamic feminism. This approach examines how the narrative of feminism is constructed and represented in digital da'wah media, focusing on Ning Uswah Syauqi, a female preacher from Islamic boarding schools who is active on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. In the context of contemporary da'wah, digital media not only serves as a channel for conveying religious messages but also as an arena of discourse where religious interpretations, values of equality, and gender identities are openly negotiated. Therefore, this study views da'wah media as a social text loaded with ideological meanings and gender power relations (Van Zoonen, 1994). The feminist media analysis approach allows researchers to re-read how women negotiate their positions and authority in the da'wah space that patriarchal narratives have dominated. In this context, Islamic feminism serves as the primary epistemological foundation. Islamic feminism is not understood as an imitation of Western feminist ideology, but rather as an attempt to reinterpret the values of justice ('adl) and reciprocity (mubadalah) contained in Islamic teachings (Kodir, 2019). Preachers such as Ning Uswah Syauqi use digital media to build an alternative space for a more humanist and egalitarian interpretation of Islam, making da'wah an instrument of social transformation oriented towards gender awareness.

This type of research is qualitative and descriptive-analytical, focusing on the meaning and representation of da'wah messages in digital media content. The researcher serves as the primary instrument for interpreting texts, images, visual narratives, and interactions between preachers and audiences in the digital space.

This approach aligns with the views of Norman Fairclough (1995) in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which treats language as a social practice closely related to the ideological structure of society (Fairclough, 1995). Through CDA, this research seeks to uncover how the language of da'wah is used to articulate the values of gender equality and construct the image of women as agents of change in Islam. The research object includes Ning Uswah Syauqi's digital da'wah content published from January 2022 to June 2024. The sample was purposively selected, taking into account the theme, the relevance of the issue, and the level of audience interaction. From the content, several videos and uploads were selected that addressed issues concerning women, family justice, education, and the social role of Muslim women. In addition, audience comments and public responses on social media were also analyzed to understand how the da'wah message was received, interpreted, and negotiated by the online community.

The data collection process is carried out through three main techniques: first, digital documentation –the collection and transcription of relevant video content, captions, and comments. The researcher explored verbal elements (word choice, narrative structure, and rhetorical style) and non-verbal elements (visual elements, expression, symbols, and space for da'wah production). Second, an online observation was conducted to examine the pattern of interaction between preachers and their followers, including how discourses about gender are shaped through comments, questions, and answers, as well as through digital conversations. Third, a literature review was conducted to strengthen the theoretical framework by examining accredited national journals, books, and university repositories that address digital da'wah, religious communication, and Islamic feminism in Indonesia. (Moleong, 2018). Data analysis was carried out by adapting Fairclough's three-dimensional model, namely: (1) text analysis, which examined linguistic structure, religious diction, and da'wah rhetorical strategies; (2) discourse practice analysis, which examines how da'wah messages are produced and circulated through social media algorithms; and (3) analysis of social practices, which relate da'wah discourse to social contexts, pesantren culture, and religious ideology (Gill, 2007). This approach helps identify how the value of equality, power relations, and women's resistance to patriarchal hegemony are manifested in digital da'wah communication.

In the interpretive process, this study draws on Barthes (1972) to examine the symbolic meanings of da'wah visuals—for example, student clothing, pesantren rooms, or body gestures—that often convey cultural and ideological messages. Semiotic approaches help us understand how visual cues in digital da'wah can reinforce or challenge traditional gender meanings in society (Barthes, 1972). This analysis is further linked to the theory of transformative da'wah as put forward by Azyumardi Azra (2021), which emphasizes that da'wah functions as a process of

empowering and liberating human beings from the structure of social injustice (Azra, 2021).

To maintain data validity, this study applied triangulation of theory and sources by comparing the results of discourse analysis, semiotic findings, and audience comment data. Theoretical triangulation is achieved by contrasting interpretations across various perspectives on Islamic feminism and contemporary da'wah communication theory. Validity is further strengthened by limited member checking, which corroborates the interpretation of the da'wah narrative with public statements and media interviews relevant to the preacher under study. The ethical aspects of research are maintained by avoiding the manipulation of digital content, accurately listing sources, and respecting the privacy of audience members participating in online comments. The researcher emphasizes the principles of feminist ethics in media research, namely respecting women's voices, avoiding stereotyping, and acknowledging their experiences as a legitimate form of knowledge. Thus, this study not only aims to describe women's da'wah practices in the digital space, but also places the media as a strategic ideological arena for the symbolic struggle of Muslim women. The media analysis approach from an Islamic feminist perspective enables a more critical and reflective reading of women's roles in articulating the values of justice, equality, and universal humanity in Islam.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

#### **Reconstruction of Women's Religious Authority in the Da'wah Space**

The phenomenon of increasing the presence of women preachers in the digital space shows a fundamental shift in the concept of Islamic religious authority in Indonesia. In the tradition of Islamic boarding schools, religious authority, especially in the realm of da'wah, has historically been associated with male kiai and ustaz figures, who gain legitimacy through scientific sanad and hierarchical religious structures. Women have, for centuries, been cast as "conveyors of domestic moral values" or as teachers in closed realms, such as the recitation of mothers and the madrasah diniyah. However, the emergence of figures such as Ning Uswah Syauqi, a young preacher from an Islamic boarding school in East Java who is active across various digital platforms, marks an important epistemic transformation in the relationship among authority, gender, and technology in contemporary Indonesian Islam. This transformation can be read through Pierre Bourdieu's framework of the field of religious production, in which religious authority is not static but the result of symbolic contestation among various social actors competing for the legitimacy of

religious meaning (Bourdieu, 1991). In the context of digital da'wah, this legitimacy is not only obtained through scientific sanad or formal institutions, but through symbolic and social capital: the ability to communicate, digital interactivity, and audience trust. Through social media, women no longer depend on patriarchal institutions to assert their authority; instead, they gain direct legitimacy from digital communities that recognize their scientific and spiritual values. According to Mutia Maulida (2022), this phenomenon is a form of redistribution of religious authority in the digital era, where women have the same opportunity to interpret and spread Islamic values with their own authenticity (Maulida, 2022). Through YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok channels, Ning Uswah presents da'wah rooted in empathy, social reflection, and women's empowerment, without abandoning pesantren traditions. He presents himself not as a "substitute ustazah," but as a scientific figure with full authority (Dianto et al., 2025).

This approach shows a new model of participatory religious authority in which authority is built through a horizontal relationship between preachers and worshippers, rather than vertically, as in the classical pesantren structure. A study by Rouf, Isti'ana, and Suslina (2024) in the *Al-Huwyah Journal* emphasizes that social media is an important space for women to produce their own religious discourse, shifting them from the position of objects to subjects in public Islamic discourse (Rouf & Isti'ana, 2024). On the other hand, the presence of female preachers such as Ning Uswah also demonstrates the convergence of traditional and digital authorities. In her da'wah content, she still refers to classic Islamic boarding-school books such as *Tafsir Jalalain* and *Bidayatul Hidayah*, while contextualizing them with contemporary issues, including the role of working mothers, symbolic violence in the household, and the justice of girls' education. This approach aligns with the concept of "transformative da'wah" developed by Azyumardi Azra (2021), which holds that da'wah must function not only to deliver normative morals but also as a process of empowerment and social liberation (Azra, 2021). Thus, the main novelty of women's digital da'wah lies in its ability to combine traditional authority with media modernity. She accepted the scientific legitimacy of Islamic boarding schools but transformed them into narratives relevant to the lives of modern women. Rahmawati (2020), in her research on *nyai pesantren* in East Java, noted that women pesantren have "strong moral authority because of their proximity to society and their ability to relate texts to context." (Rahmawati, 2020) This proximity-based authority is now being expanded through digital platforms, making the audience no longer limited to local students, but thousands of followers across regions and social classes.

One important dimension of this transformation is the redefinition of the concept of "alim". In classical Islamic epistemology, an alim is measured by mastery of texts and sanad. However, in the digital context, alimahs like Ning Uswah

introduce a new dimension: a communicative, reflective, and empathetic science. Research by Mastorat et al. (2025) in the *Meuseuraya Journal* emphasizes that female preachers in digital media play a dual role as translators of moderate Islamic values and facilitators of gender awareness (Rahmawati, 2025). This process also shows how the social capital of Islamic boarding school women is moving from the domestic space to the digital public space. Ning Uswah uses gentle visual communication techniques, inclusive narratives, and direct interaction with online worshippers to build trust and engagement. Research by Fahmi (2022) shows that empathy-based communication strategies carried out by women preachers increase the effectiveness of da'wah messages and expand the acceptance of cross-gender audiences (Fahmi, 2022). Furthermore, women's digital da'wah contributes to the deconstruction of patriarchal relations in religious interpretation. In his lectures, Ning Uswah often quoted hadiths and verses of the Qur'an, interpreting them in terms of reciprocity rather than domination. For example, in QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13, he interprets "inna akramakum 'indallāhi atqākum" as the theological basis that piety, not gender, is the measure of glory. This approach reinforces the views of Muslim feminists such as Amina Wadud (1999) and Asma Barlas (2002) who reject a hierarchical reading of sacred texts (Wadud, 1999). In addition to theological factors, technological factors shape the reconstruction of authority. The mediatization of religion, as explained by Hjarvard (2013), makes the media not only a means of communication but also a social actor that shapes how religion is practiced and lived (Harvard, 2013). In this context, social media serves as a space for the production of new religious meanings. Religious authority is now shaped not only by fatwas and books but also by algorithms, visual aesthetics, and audience participation (Fatikh & Hendrik, 2023).

This transformation also challenges the traditional view of the ulama as the sole guardians of orthodoxy. According to Azizah's research (2025), women preachers use digital media not to replace the authority of scholars but to democratize religious interpretations, making them more accessible and relevant to daily life (Azizah, 2025). Thus, digital da'wah functions as an "interpretive bridge" between text and context. From a socio-religious perspective, this new model of authority has an impact on changing gender relations in the Islamic public sphere. Male audiences are now also recipients of female da'wah, something that was previously taboo in traditional Islamic boarding school spaces. This strengthens Miriam Cooke's (2001) thesis about "*women claiming to be muslims.*" that Muslim women use public spaces to reclaim the authority of their religious interpretation and expression (Cooke, 2001).

In practice, the presence of figures such as Ning Uswah fosters a participatory da'wah ethos: the congregation is no longer a passive audience but an active participant in constructing religious meaning. Commentary, live discussion, and

Question Box are part of the interactive da'wah process. This is what Ismah (2019) calls "reflective-participatory da'wah, where religious messages grow through social dialogue, not Singular indoctrination (Ismah, 2019). Thus, the reconstruction of women's religious authority in the digital da'wah space is not just a change in role but an epistemological shift: from hierarchical authority to one grounded in interaction, empathy, and digital credibility. Women's da'wah, exemplified by Ning Uswah, emphasized that religious legitimacy is no longer monopolized by patriarchal structures but is produced through *Knowledge Performance* disseminated in an open, inclusive, and reflective manner.

## Discussion

The transformation of women's da'wah in Indonesia is not only about changes in communication form but also about a shift in the paradigm of religious interpretation. Da'wah carried out by Islamic boarding school women, such as Ning Uswah Syauqi, presents a new pattern in contemporary Islamic discourse, namely contextual Islamic feminism, an approach that integrates the principle of gender equality with religious values without violating Islamic traditions. This approach answers two main challenges: first, resistance to Western feminism that is considered secular; Second, patriarchal bias in religious interpretation is still deeply rooted among Indonesian Muslim communities. In her various digital da'wah content, Ning Uswah develops a reflective and empathetic Islamic feminist narrative. He does not use the terms "resistance" or "liberation" in a political sense; instead, he frames the message of equality in terms of Islam's spiritual values. For example, in one of her lectures entitled "Islam and Independent Women, she emphasized that "being an independent woman does not mean rejecting the role of the family, but becoming an active subject in social and scientific worship." This statement reflects a feminist paradigm grounded in social interpretation, placing women's experiences at the center of the interpretation of religious texts. This approach aligns with the concept of Qira'ah Mubadalah developed by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir (2019), a tafsir based on the principle of reciprocity (mubadalah) between men and women in social, legal, and spiritual relations (Kodir, 2019). This principle does not remove natural differences, but emphasizes equality in glory and responsibility. By adopting a mubadalah, Ning Uswah's da'wah avoids the dichotomy between "obedient and free," but emphasizes that equality is part of piety itself.

Theoretically, Islamic feminist thought that appears in digital da'wah is rooted in the paradigm of contextual hermeneutics. According to Amina Wadud (1999), Islamic sacred texts must be read through three layers of meaning: text, context, and reader (Wadud, 1999). Literal readings of texts governing gender relations often ignore the dimensions of the social and historical context in which the verse is

derived. Female preachers such as Ning Uswah translate this theory into da'wah practice by presenting the stories of Qur'anic women (such as Khadijah, Asiyah, or Ummu Salamah) as active, productive, and intelligent models of piety. In her various works, she emphasized that these female figures are not only symbols of tenderness but also representations of spiritual leadership. Research by Hidayati (2021) in the *Al-Ibriz Journal* supports this finding. She said that "the interpretation of pesantren from a feminist perspective results in a more inclusive understanding of religious texts and opens up space for women's reflection on their social roles." (Hidayati, 2021) This means that the narrative of Islamic feminism in digital da'wah is not only changing the way women speak, but also changing the epistemology of interpretation: from hierarchical knowledge to participatory and reflective knowledge. The fundamental difference between Islamic feminism and Western feminism is also an important aspect in the formation of digital da'wah narratives. Islamic feminism does not depart from the idea of secularization or rejection of religious texts, but from the reinterpretation of Qur'anic values that affirm moral equality between men and women. Asma Barlas (2002) stated that the Qur'an contains "*Egalitarian Epistemology*, namely, a knowledge system that supports equality because it is based on monotheism, not biological superiority (Barlas, 2002). Ning Uswah's da'wah takes the same spirit that it does not call for "feminism" in ideological terms, but rather reinterprets the text in an empathetic way to women's social reality.

Visualization is also an important tool for constructing an Islamic feminist narrative in the digital space. In many video uploads, Ning Uswah presents herself with a modern pesantren aesthetic, dressed in sharia, in a simple yet warm space, with soft visual tones and soothing background music. Semiotic analysis of the content indicates that this visual style functions as an "icon of progressive piety," depicting a woman who is religious, rational, and empowered. Roland Barthes (1972) called this mechanism mythopoesis, the formation of mythological meaning through visual symbols (Barthes, 1972). Through a symbolic combination of traditional fashion, inclusive language, and modern narratives, Ning Uswah has built a "digital nyai" identity that represents the shifting role of Islamic boarding school women in the new media landscape. A study by Maulidah (2022) found that female preachers who employ an authentic and communicative visual style are more receptive to audiences across age groups because it creates an impression of credibility and closeness (Maulidah, 2022). This shows that, in the digital context, religious authority is shaped by both aesthetic representations and academic authority. In addition to its representational aspect, the communication strategy is highly adaptive. In much of his work, Ning Uswah employs a narrative rhetorical style, emphasizing personal and student narratives as a form of "reflective da'wah. This approach is in accordance with the concept of empathic da'wah explained by Ismah (2019), namely da'wah that

prioritizes experiential dialogue and the formation of social awareness (Ismah, 2019). Through this strategy, Islamic feminist da'wah was more readily accepted by people who had previously been allergic to the term "feminism." In analyzing audience comments on the content of their da'wah, many women expressed a sense of being "represented" by the messages conveyed. They relate the teachings conveyed to real-life experiences—such as social pressures on domestic roles, economic demands, or differences in interpretation in the household. This proves that digital da'wah based on Islamic feminism not only has an impact on the cognitive level, but also psychologically and emotionally.

According to Fahmi, women's da'wah in digital media has high affective power because it employs soft, emotional language, familiar spiritual symbols, and a soothing, non-patronizing rhetoric (Fahmi, 2022). Thus, this kind of da'wah has the potential to build a "spiritual safe space" for women to reflect on themselves without feeling judged. Furthermore, this practice of da'wah reflects praxian theology, which emphasizes the importance of linking faith to social action. Azra (2021) calls it a form of "liberation da'wah," in which the delivery of religious values is directed toward transforming social consciousness rather than merely through religious rituals (Azra, 2021). In the context of feminist digital da'wah, this transformation is seen in messages about education, economic equality, and women's social participation. Thus, the novelty of this research lies in the discovery of Islamic feminist da'wah forms based on pesantren that have emerged in the Indonesian digital space. This da'wah integrates the scientific authority of Islamic boarding-school traditions, modern digital communication strategies, and Islamic values of equality into a coherent, contextual narrative. Preachers like Ning Uswah are not only translators of Islamic feminism but also architects of new social interpretations that connect texts with the reality of Muslim women today.

### **Social Media as an Emancipatory Arena and Gender Knowledge Production**

The transformation of da'wah in the digital era not only affects the way religious messages are conveyed but also alters the structure of religious knowledge production. Social media has evolved into a new epistemic arena in which Muslim women are not merely recipients of interpretation, but producers of religious discourse and agents of knowledge. In this context, figures such as Ning Uswah Syauqi, who actively use platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, show how digital media can function as an emancipatory and reflective space for Islamic boarding school women in building authority, reconstructing the meaning of piety, and expanding the reach of inclusive and gender-sensitive da'wah. According to the theory of *mediatization of religion*, as Stig Hjarvard put it, the media are no longer merely tools for disseminating messages but have become social and cultural actors

that help determine how religion is lived and interpreted (Hjarvard). Digital media enables the communication of Islamic values through visual, narrative, and interactive formats, making them accessible to millions of users in a short time. In this case, digital da'wah is not only a rhetorical activity but also a cultural practice that creates a new participatory space for women.

Ela Indah Dwi Syayekti's (2024) study found that online media can be an effective means to build a "women-friendly da'wah, which is a form of da'wah that prioritizes life experiences, social reflection, and empathy for women's reality (Syayekti, 2024). In the context of Ning Uswah Syauqi, his da'wah employs visual narratives and personal stories that are close to everyday life—such as childcare, education, and domestic roles—yet are replete with spiritual and egalitarian messages. This approach doubles as a tool of social awareness (*Social Awareness*) and a theological educational tool that emphasizes moral equality in Islam. Islamic boarding school women like Ning Uswah make social media an emancipatory space, a place where they can negotiate religious identity and social roles without relying on the patriarchal structure of traditional Islamic boarding schools. This is in line with Miriam Cooke's (2001) research on Women Claiming Islam, which explains that Muslim women use the media as a strategy to "reclaim" religious public spaces from male domination (Cooke, 2001). By using digital technology, they can display their religious authority without violating social norms of decency.

In the Indonesian context, Rahmawati et al. noted that Islamic boarding school women's organizations, such as Nasyyatul Aisyiyah, use digital media to expand the reach of da'wah and encourage progressive Islamic values-based gender literacy (Rahmawati, 2020). A similar strategy is evident in Ning Uswah's efforts to build an online community with hundreds of thousands of followers, mostly young women who actively engage through comment features and live-streaming sessions. This digital space can be sociologically categorized as a religious epistemic community, in which knowledge is collectively produced and validated through open dialogue. Research by Dorothy Smith (1987) within the framework of feminist standpoint theory confirms that women's experiences are a valid and valuable source of knowledge for understanding broader social and religious structures (Smith, 1987). Through digital interaction, women not only consume religious knowledge but also articulate their own spiritual understanding and experience. The results of Izzah Azizah's (2025) research show that platforms such as Instagram are an effective medium to increase women's fiqh literacy through light, communicative, and easily accessible visual campaigns and da'wah (Azizah, 2025). In this context, women's digital da'wah facilitates a "democratization of Islamic knowledge" that prioritizes open, participatory access to religious issues that were previously confined to the elite domain of the ulama. Furthermore, the digital space enables a network of

religious solidarity across regions and generations. Through online interactions, women from various social backgrounds can connect and exchange views on their religious roles. Fahmi's (2022) study in the *Journal of Da'wah and Communication* shows that women digital preachers have great potential in shaping more inclusive religious public opinion through an empathetic and non-confrontational communication style (Fahmi, 2022).

Conceptually, this strengthens the theory of transformative da'wah as put forward by Azyumardi Azra (2021), who views da'wah as a process of social awareness and strengthening the value of justice (Azra, 2021). By using social media, Islamic boarding school women not only convey moral values but also advocate for social transformation through narratives: from interpretation to practice, from discourse to action. However, the digital space is not always neutral. It also raises a new challenge: the commodification of religiosity, in which da'wah can become entangled in algorithmic logic and popularity (Campbell, 2013). In this case, the credibility of women preachers is tested by the extent to which they can balance spiritual substance with the aesthetic demands of the media. Rosalind Gill's (2007) research confirms that women's representation in the media is often trapped in a new patriarchal aesthetic, where women are required to appear attractive as well as religious (Gill, 2007). Ning Uswah overcomes this dilemma with a sincere, authentic communication style that conveys the science of the pesantren without losing emotional closeness with its audience. From a semiotic perspective, the symbols in Ning Uswah's digital da'wah content, such as warm lighting, the prayer room's background, and a simple appearance, create a visual ethos that signifies piety and authenticity. According to Barthes, such signs constitute a "cultural code" that reinforces the audience's trust in communicators' credibility (Barthes, 1972). This aesthetic shows that women's digital da'wah not only conveys a message but also builds a soothing and empowering religious imaginary. Nur Ismah's research emphasizes that an empathetic approach to women's da'wah, by prioritizing experiential narratives and moral reflection, has proven more effective than the dogmatic approach in building the congregation's spiritual awareness (Ismah, 2019). In this context, Ning Uswah's da'wah strategy aligns with a participatory-feminist approach, in which the audience not only listens but also participates in the reflection process.

In addition to the communication aspect, the media approach as a space for spiritual education should also be emphasized. Ela Syayekti (2024) shows that digital platforms can serve as online madrassas where women learn, discuss, and find meaning in religion relevant to their realities (Syayekti, 2024). This space constitutes a form of "Public Pedagogy" in Religion, in which women serve as educators, facilitators, and moral movers. In terms of audiences, the two-way interaction found

in digital media marks the birth of a new form of participatory da'wah relations. Commentary Q&A sessions and online discussions show strong emotional engagement between preachers and followers. This phenomenon strengthens Mutia Maulidah's thesis that the digitization of da'wah opens up opportunities for a "women's epistemic revolution," in which women are actively involved in constructing religious meaning (Maulida, 2022). Thus, social media can be understood as both an emancipatory and an epistemic space. Ning Uswah provides opportunities for women to negotiate their religious identities, challenge patriarchal structures, and build new knowledge systems grounded in experience and values of equality. Women's digital da'wah is not only a form of communication but also a practice of constructing religious knowledge that is reflective, participatory, and transformative. The novelty of this discussion lies in recognizing social media as a new locus of gender-based Islamic knowledge production. If previously the authority of Islamic knowledge was monopolized by the elite of scholars and the structure of Islamic boarding schools, the process is now more open, horizontal, and democratic. This phenomenon broadens the horizon of da'wah studies by presenting a new paradigm: da'wah as a praxis of knowledge and social awareness grounded in women's experiences.

## CONCLUSION

This research shows that the presence of women preachers from Islamic boarding schools in the digital space, such as Ning Uswah Syauqi, reflects an important transformation in Islamic da'wah practices in Indonesia. Da'wah delivered through social media not only changes the way religious messages are disseminated but also builds a new model of participatory, empathetic, and reflective religious authority. Women's authority no longer depends on the patriarchal structures of Islamic boarding schools but is somewhat shaped by spiritual credibility, communicative capacity, and social resonance with digital audiences. In addition, this study emphasizes that the narrative of Islamic feminism in women's digital da'wah constitutes a contextual interpretation of Islamic teachings oriented toward justice, reciprocity, and humanity. The da'wah of Islamic boarding schools presents an Islamic feminist discourse that is not confrontational, but collaborative and based on piety values.

Social media functions not only as a means of da'wah, but also as an emancipatory and epistemic space for women to produce religious knowledge. Through this space, women play an active role as subjects of interpretation and agents of social transformation. Thus, the digital da'wah of Islamic boarding schools represents a more humanistic, inclusive, and equitable face of Islam, a form of transformative da'wah actualization that combines the tradition of Islamic boarding

schools, Islamic feminism values, and digital technology as an instrument of social liberation and enlightenment.

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