



TRANSFORMATIVE DA'WAH FOR GEN-Z IN THE ERA OF DISRUPTION

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Abstract

The era of disruption has brought fundamental changes in communication patterns and religious practices, especially for Generation Z (Gen-Z) who grew up in digital culture. Islamic da'wah faces new challenges in the form of fragmentation of authority, instant culture, and the penetration of transnational ideologies through social media. This article aims to analyze the reality of Islamic da'wah in Gen-Z in the era of disruption, their interaction patterns with religion and digital da'wah content, and formulate transformative da'wah concepts that are relevant to the characteristics of this generation. Using a qualitative approach based on literature review and netnography methods, this study found that Gen-Z interacts with religion selectively, pragmatically, and participatively through digital spaces, although they are vulnerable to simplification of meaning and penetration of extreme beliefs. The concept of transformative da'wah is offered as an alternative strategy that integrates theological depth, dialogical pedagogy, the use of adaptive digital media, and social praxis orientation. The results of the study show that transformative da'wah not only demands the use of digital technology, but also the strengthening of scientific authority, psychological assistance, and participatory mechanisms that allow the internalization of Islamic values in Gen-Z social practices. Thus, transformative da'wah can be a relevant, ethical, and sustainable model of da'wah in the era of disruption.

Kata kunci

Dakwah, Transformatif, Generasi Z, Era Disrupsi, Digital Religion, Netnografi

Abstrak

Era disrupsi telah menghadirkan perubahan fundamental dalam pola komunikasi dan praktik keagamaan, khususnya bagi Generasi Z (Gen-Z) yang tumbuh dalam kultur digital. Dakwah Islam menghadapi tantangan baru berupa fragmentasi otoritas, budaya instan, serta penetrasi ideologi transnasional melalui media sosial. Artikel ini bertujuan menganalisis realitas dakwah Islam pada Gen-Z di era disrupsi, pola interaksi mereka dengan agama dan konten dakwah digital, serta merumuskan konsep dakwah transformatif yang relevan dengan karakteristik generasi ini. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis kajian literatur dan metode netnografi, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa Gen-Z berinteraksi dengan agama secara

selektif, pragmatis, dan partisipatif melalui ruang digital, meskipun rentan terhadap penyederhanaan makna dan penetrasi paham ekstrem. Konsep dakwah transformatif ditawarkan sebagai strategi alternatif yang mengintegrasikan kedalaman teologis, pedagogi dialogis, pemanfaatan media digital adaptif, serta orientasi praksis sosial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dakwah transformatif tidak hanya menuntut penggunaan teknologi digital, tetapi juga penguatan otoritas keilmuan, pendampingan psikologis, serta mekanisme partisipatif yang memungkinkan internalisasi nilai Islam dalam praktik sosial Gen-Z. Dengan demikian, dakwah transformatif dapat menjadi model dakwah yang relevan, etis, dan berkelanjutan di era disrupsi.

Introduction

The development of digital technology has brought fundamental changes in the social, cultural, and religious life landscape of the community, including the practice of Islamic da'wah. Da'wah which used to take place mostly through the pulpit, lectures, or print media, has now shifted to a more fluid and interactive digital space. This change cannot be separated from the presence of the era of disruption, where technological innovations, especially social media, create changes in the way of communication, interaction patterns, and the way humans seek and access religious knowledge.¹

Generation Z (Gen-Z), which is the generation born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s, is the group most intensely connected to the digital world. According to a report by the Katadata Insight Center, more than 98% of Indonesian Gen-Z actively use the internet, and 70% of them use social media as the main source of information, including religious information.² This phenomenon creates both opportunities and challenges: on the one hand, their access to da'wah has become wider, but on the other hand, the free flow of information makes Gen-Z vulnerable to superficial, fragmented, or even misleading religious content.

On the other hand, Hutchings' research confirms that Gen-Z's interaction with religion in the digital space is participatory: they are not only recipients of da'wah messages, but also producers of meaning through comments, *remixes*, or recreations of da'wah content.³ This reality shows that the conventional model of monological da'wah is no longer adequate. Da'wah for Gen-Z should ideally be transformative: able to guide them not only in ritual and dogmatic aspects, but also in shaping critical awareness, social ethics, and the ability to face the complexities of the times. Transformative da'wah needs

¹ Clayton Christensen, *The Innovator's Dilemma* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 1997), hlm. 45.

²Katadata Insight Center, *Digital Behavior of Gen Z Indonesia* (Jakarta: Katadata, 2023).

³Tim Hutchings, *Creating Church Online: Ritual, Community and New Media* (London: Routledge, 2017), hlm. 55–60.

to integrate spiritual, moral, intellectual, and digital approaches to be relevant to an open, critical, and creative Gen-Z culture.⁴

Thus, the urgency of this research lies in the need to understand how Islamic da'wah can be designed in a transformative manner by paying attention to digital consumption patterns, communication preferences, and the dynamics of Gen-Z's religious identity in the era of disruption.

Studies on da'wah transformation for Generation Z have been widely carried out by researchers, both in the context of digital da'wah and strengthening religiosity in the midst of disruption. Research conducted by Munir (2021) emphasizes that traditional da'wah patterns that rely on taklim assemblies need to be reconstructed through a digital approach, because Gen-Z is more likely to receive religious messages through interactive social media.⁵ In line with that, Sari (2022) found that the use of platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok plays a significant role in shaping Gen-Z's religious perception, although on the other hand there are challenges in the form of the dissemination of religious content that is superficial and tends to be sensational.⁶

Other research by Hidayat and Kurniawan shows that transformative da'wah does not only focus on the normative delivery of religious teachings, but also on internalizing Islamic values in social practices, for example in environmental issues, social justice, and digital literacy.⁷ This indicates that da'wah for Gen-Z can no longer rely solely on one-way lectures, but must open up spaces for participation, dialogue, and collective experiences that are relevant to their lives. Meanwhile, Rahmawati emphasized the importance of a developmental psychology approach in transformative da'wah, because Gen-Z tends to be more critical, independent, and needs rational reasons in accepting religious teachings.⁸

From these previous studies, it can be seen that there is a consensus that da'wah transformation for Gen-Z must integrate digital, participatory, and thematic approaches in accordance with their social problems. However, there is still room for deeper study on how transformative da'wah can be implemented systematically by paying attention to the characteristics of Gen-Z who are multitasking, global-minded, and living in a fast-paced flow of information.

Previous studies on da'wah for Generation Z generally focused on the aspect of using digital media and receiving religious messages through online platforms. For example, Munir's (2021) research focuses more on the shift of da'wah media from the

⁴Azyumardi Azra, *Islamic Political Transformation* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2016), p. 22.

⁵Munir, A. (2021). "Digital Da'wah in the Era of Generation Z." *Journal of Islamic Communication*, 15(2), 101–115.

⁶Sari, R. (2022). "Social Media and Religious Perceptions of Generation Z." *Journal of Da'wah and Communication*, 10(1), 55–72.

⁷Hidayat, A., & Kurniawan, M. (2023). "Transformative Da'wah Model in the Era of Disruption." *Al-Balagh: Journal of Da'wah and Communication*, 8(2), 221–240.

⁸Rahmawati, L. (2023). "The Psychology of Generation Z Development and the Implications of Da'wah." *Journal of Islamic Psychology*, 12(1), 88–103.

taklim assembly to social media, while Sari highlights how YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok shape Gen-Z's religious perception.⁹ However, the two studies have not provided an in-depth analysis of how transformative da'wah strategies can touch on the praxis aspects of Gen-Z social life, such as critical awareness, digital literacy, or sensitivity to contemporary issues.

In addition, Hidayat and Kurniawan's research has indeed touched on the integration of da'wah with social issues such as the environment and justice, but the study is more conceptual and has not explored the real experiences of Gen-Z in responding to transformative da'wah.¹⁰ Similarly, Rahmawati (2023) emphasizes the importance of a developmental psychology approach, but the focus is still limited to the personality aspects and cognitive needs of Gen-Z, so it has not been comprehensively linked to the participatory da'wah model in the digital space.¹¹

Thus, there is a research gap that can be used as a foothold, namely the need for a study that not only explains the use of digital media in da'wah, but also describes how transformative da'wah can be really internalized into the lives of Gen-Z through participatory, netnographic, and social experience-based approaches in the digital space. This is important so that da'wah is not only a passive consumption on social media, but also a movement that is able to form the critical, ethical, and social practice awareness of Gen-Z in the midst of the current of disruption.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with the netnography method, namely the development from ethnography to digital space introduced by Robert V. Kozinets.¹² This method was chosen because Generation Z has formed a lot of their identity, communication, and religious experiences through social media. Netnography provides an opportunity for researchers to observe and understand religious practices in online communities, both through content consumption, interaction, and active audience participation. In this way, netnography not only functions as a data collection technique, but also as a relevant frame of mind in examining the phenomenon of transformative da'wah in the era of disruption.¹³

The data in this study was collected from Gen-Z's activity on popular social media such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. The content studied was in the form of short da'wah videos, comments and audience responses, to the practice of *remixing* and respeading religious messages. The collection process was carried out through searching relevant digital communities, observation both participatory and non-participatory,

⁹Munir, A. (2021). "Digital Da'wah in the Era of Generation Z." *Journal of Islamic Communication*, 15(2), 101–115., Sari, R. (2022). "Social Media and Religious Perceptions of Generation Z." *Journal of Da'wah and Communication*, 10(1), 55–72.

¹⁰Hidayat, A., & Kurniawan, M. (2023). "Transformative Da'wah Model in the Era of Disruption." *Al-Balagh: Journal of Da'wah and Communication*, 8(2), 221–240.

¹¹Rahmawati, L. (2023). "The Psychology of Generation Z Development and the Implications of Da'wah." *Journal of Islamic Psychology*, 12(1), 88–103.

¹² Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online* (London: SAGE Publications, 2010), hlm. 3–5.

¹³Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Redefined* (London: SAGE Publications, 2015), hlm. 7.

archiving of found content, and limited online interviews with da'wah creators and some Gen-Z audiences. The data analysis follows a *netnography* stage that includes initial coding to find key themes, study of digital interactions, and interpretation of religious culture in the social media ecosystem.¹⁴

To ensure validity, this study uses source triangulation by comparing data from various platforms, conducting *member checking* of some informants, and maintaining process documentation through *trail audits*. The ethical aspect is maintained by disguising the identity of users, using only public data, and asking for *informed consent* in online interviews. However, this study has limitations due to the highly dynamic nature of the digital space, where changes in social media algorithms and differences between real identities and digital personas can affect the results of the study.¹⁵

Results and Discussion

The Reality of Islamic Da'wah in Gen-Z in the Era of Disruption and Its Challenges

The reality of Islamic da'wah in the era of disruption cannot be separated from the development of communication technology and digital culture that colors the lives of Generation Z. Da'wah, which previously relied on the pulpit, taklim assembly, or face-to-face meetings, has now undergone a significant shift towards digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, podcasts, and discussion rooms based on instant messaging applications. This shift shows that da'wah is no longer only taking place in physical space, but also in a virtual space that is fluid, interactive, and without geographical boundaries.

Generation Z is a group that is very close to technology since birth. They are used to accessing information quickly, processing many things at once (multitasking), and have a strong preference for visual content and short narratives. This character provides a great opportunity for Islamic da'wah to reach a wider audience through digital media. However, at the same time, the challenges faced are also increasingly complex.

First, there is a fragmentation of religious authority. In the digital world, anyone can become a "da'i" or religious influencer without having adequate scientific competence. This phenomenon causes religious authority to become blurred, because the content of da'wah is mixed between science-based and only popular rhetoric. According to Hefner (2019), this condition creates what is called a *religious market place*, which is an open religious market where traditional religious authorities must compete with new actors who take advantage of digital popularity.¹⁶

Second, instant culture and the speed of information make Gen-Z prefer short content, such as 1–3 minute videos, to long studies that require concentration. This phenomenon often leads to a superficial understanding of religion, as complex teachings are condensed in a format of quick entertainment. A similar view is conveyed by Campbell and Tsuria (2021), who assert that digital religion often encourages the

¹⁴ Christine Hine, *Virtual Ethnography* (London: SAGE Publications, 2000), hlm. 22–25.

¹⁵ Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2018), hlm. 166.

¹⁶ Hefner, R. W. (2019). *Sharia Law and Modern Muslim Ethics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

reduction of religion to simple, easy-to-consume symbols, instead of providing a deep theological understanding.¹⁷

Third, there is exposure to transnational ideology and digital extremism. The digital space is an effective medium for certain groups to spread radical narratives that target young people. Research conducted by Azra (2020) highlights that Gen-Z is very vulnerable to being influenced by emotional and provocative religious messages because their information consumption patterns tend to be fast and not always critical.¹⁸

From the critical view of these experts, it is clear that the reality of Islamic da'wah in Gen-Z in the era of disruption is not only about opportunities for the wider dissemination of religious messages, but also presents a new dilemma in the form of the loss of authority boundaries, the banality of religious understanding due to instant culture, and the threat of deviant ideologies. Therefore, da'wah is not enough to adapt to digital media, but also to rearrange strategies to be able to provide depth of substance, maintain scientific authority, and fortify the younger generation from the penetration of misleading ideologies.

Gen-Z's Interaction with Religion and Da'wah Content in the Digital Space

Gen-Z views religion not only as a normative doctrine, but also as a social identity influenced by the digital space. The results of Sari (2022) show that Gen-Z's interaction with religious content on social media is selective and pragmatic: they choose ustaz or religious influencers who are in accordance with their language style, visual aesthetics, and narrative that are relatable to everyday life.

In addition, Gen-Z prefers a two-way communication model to one-way lectures. They often ask questions through the comment column, participate in online discussions, or even reproduce da'wah content in the form of memes and short videos. This is in line with the findings of Rahmawati (2023) that the critical and independent characteristics of Gen-Z make them need rational reasons in understanding religious teachings. However, this interaction also presents a paradox. On the one hand, digitalization opens up space for participation and wider access to religious science. On the other hand, social media actually makes religion a popular commodity, so that some da'wah content emphasizes the entertainment aspect rather than the substance of teachings.

Concept and Implementation of Transformative Da'wah for Gen-Z

Transformative da'wah is a da'wah paradigm that not only emphasizes the normative delivery of religious teachings, but also on the process of internalizing Islamic values in the reality of social life. This da'wah aims to encourage changes in individuals and society towards more just, inclusive, and in accordance with the spirit of Islam which is rahmatan lil-'alamin. In the context of Generation Z, transformative da'wah is becoming

¹⁷Campbell, H. A., & Tsuria, R. (2021). *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media*. London: Routledge.

¹⁸Azra, A. (2020). "Generasi Z dan Tantangan Radikalisme Digital." *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora*, 9(1), 1-12.

increasingly relevant because they live in a digital culture, think critically, multitask, and are very concerned about actual social issues.

Conceptually, transformative da'wah departs from three dimensions. First, the epistemological dimension, namely changing the way da'wah is delivered to suit the digital logic of Gen-Z, for example using visual, interactive, and data-based narratives. Second, the sociological dimension, namely the relationship between da'wah and real issues such as social justice, the environment, mental health, and digital literacy. Third, the praxis dimension, namely the implementation of da'wah in the form of real actions, such as social movements, solidarity campaigns, and virtual communities that build collective awareness.

The implementation of transformative da'wah for Gen-Z can be realized through at least three main strategies. First, a cultural-digital approach, by utilizing communication languages that are close to the Gen-Z world, such as storytelling, creative visuals, and short content that is informative but still substantial. Second, a participatory approach, where Gen-Z is not only the object of da'wah, but also the subject involved in producing, criticizing, and spreading the message of da'wah. This is in line with Campbell's (2020) research which emphasizes the importance of *participatory culture* in the context of digital religion, where people play an active role in the construction of religious messages.¹⁹ Third, the social praxis approach, which links da'wah with real actions, such as social activities, empowerment programs, or environmental campaigns based on Islamic values, so that the message of da'wah feels more relevant and contextual.

However, transformative da'wah also faces criticism. According to Kuntowijoyo (1991), transformative da'wah should not stop at the cultural dimension, but must be able to change the social structure and have a real impact on social justice.²⁰ This means that if transformative da'wah is only trapped in popular packaging without an orientation to social transformation, it risks becoming just entertainment content. This critical view is in line with Mandaville's analysis which assesses that da'wah in the digital era tends to emphasize religious personalization rather than socio-political transformation, so that religious messages can be reduced to superficial individual consumption.²¹

Thus, transformative da'wah for Gen-Z must be understood and designed holistically. Da'wah is no longer enough to be seen as an activity of delivering religious messages that are normative and monological, but rather as a long process that includes the formation of critical awareness, strengthening social participation, and empowering individuals and communities. This holistic approach requires da'wah to touch various aspects of Gen-Z's lives as a whole. In the cognitive dimension, da'wah needs to encourage the ability to think critically, logically, and reflexively in the face of the flood of digital information, so that they are able to distinguish between valid religious

¹⁹ Campbell, H. A. (2020). *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media*. London: Routledge.

²⁰ Kuntowijoyo. (1991). *The Islamic Paradigm: Interpretation for Action*. Bandung: Mizan.

²¹ Mandaville, P. (2014). *Islam and Politics*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

knowledge and content that is superficial or even misleading. In the affective dimension, da'wah must be sensitive to the emotional and spiritual needs of Gen-Z, who often face psychological pressure, loneliness, and identity crises due to exposure to global social media and culture. Meanwhile, in the practical dimension, da'wah is required to be relevant to actual issues that are close to the daily reality of Gen-Z, such as social problems, injustice, the environment, and universal humanitarian issues.

With such characteristics, da'wah can no longer stop at a one-way lecture pattern that emphasizes the transfer of information from the da'i to the audience. On the contrary, da'wah must be transformed into a space for interactive, participatory, and collaborative dialogue. In this space, Gen-Z is given the opportunity to actively voice their views, ask questions, and interpret Islamic teachings according to the context of their lives. Furthermore, transformative da'wah opens up opportunities for the co-construction process of religious meaning, where the message of Islam is not only conveyed, but also discussed, questioned, and internalized through real experience. In this way, da'wah not only gives birth to a textual religious understanding, but also a critical awareness that connects the teachings of Islam with the contemporary social realities that Gen-Z faces.

This concept requires da'i, academics, and da'wah activists to change their roles from mere communicators to facilitators of dialogue and agents of social change. As facilitators of dialogue, they must be able to create a space for discussion that is inclusive, egalitarian, and open to diversity of views, so that da'wah is not perceived as a rigid doctrine, but as a living and dynamic guide to life. Meanwhile, as agents of social change, da'wah actors need to be present in real life problems, such as poverty issues, social justice, mental health, and environmental damage, and offer solutions based on Islamic values. This is in line with the spirit of the Prophet ﷺ who not only conveyed revelations, but also built a civilized, just, and harmonious society.

Only in this way, Islamic da'wah will be able to answer the challenges of the era of disruption characterized by the rapid flow of information, the fragmentation of religious authority, and the dominance of global popular culture. Transformative da'wah provides an opportunity to present an Islam that is friendly, inclusive, and relevant to the digital reality of Gen-Z, while strengthening their Islamic identity without severing ties with the development of modernity. With this model, the spiritual and social needs of Generation Z can be met in a balanced manner: they receive authentic religious guidance, feel meaningful social involvement, and are able to express their religious beliefs in a creative way in accordance with the digital ecosystem they live in.

Conclusion

Islamic da'wah in the era of disruption has undergone a fundamental shift, especially in the context of Gen-Z's interaction with religion through the digital space. The biggest challenges are the fragmentation of authority, instant culture, and the potential for the spread of distorted beliefs. However, Gen-Z also provides great opportunities for da'wah, because they tend to be critical, open, and participatory.

Therefore, transformative da'wah is needed, namely da'wah that integrates digital, participatory, and social practice approaches. With this model, da'wah can be more relevant, touch the daily experiences of Gen-Z, and be able to form critical awareness and sustainable social transformation.

Research Implications

The results of this research have important implications for the development of Islamic da'wah strategies in the era of disruption, especially in answering the challenges faced by Generation Z. First, da'wah needs to adopt a transformative approach based on understanding digital culture, so that religious messages are not only conveyed textually, but also packaged in a creative, interactive, and in accordance with Gen-Z information consumption patterns. Second, this study emphasizes the need to reposition the role of da'i, academics, and da'wah practitioners as facilitators of dialogue and agents of social change who are able to present Islam as a concrete solution to religious, social, and humanitarian problems. Third, this research also provides a theoretical and practical basis for the development of a netnography-based participatory da'wah model, which allows da'wah to be closer to the reality of Gen-Z's digital experience.

Thus, the implications of this research are not only limited to strengthening academic discourse, but can also be applied in da'wah programs, Islamic education, and religious policies that are more responsive to the dynamics of the younger generation in the digital era.

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