



The Phenomenon of E-Dakwah in the New Normal Era: Digital Literacy of Virtual Da'i in Da'wah Activities

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Abstract

The emergence of the new normal era brought many changes in various aspects of life, including da'wah activities. Adaptation of the implementation of da'wah online called e-da'wah is an innovation that can be done so that da'wah activities can continue to run. The phenomenon of e-da'wah in the new normal era is an important and interesting research to study. This study aims to analyze the digital literacy experience of virtual preachers in carrying out da'wah activities online in the new normal era. The research method used is qualitative with a phenomenological approach to explore the experience of digital literacy preachers, especially those related to communication and collaboration elements. Data analysis was carried out by reducing steps, presenting data, and drawing conclusions. The results showed that the ability of the virtual data in Jintap Ponorogo Village to carry out da'wah in the new normal era was at the basic level for use skills and communicative abilities, while critical understanding was at the medium level. This research is expected to contribute to optimizing the implementation of e-da'wah in the new normal era, especially by increasing digital literacy for virtual preachers in Jintap Village, Ponorogo.

Keywords: virtual, preacher, e-da'wah, digital literacy, new normal

Introduction

The emergence of the new normal era or the new normal affects various aspects of life. The new normal requires every individual to be able to adapt to carrying out various activities while maintaining health protocols. Several policies were issued to control activity participation during the new normal era to minimize the spread of the virus in Indonesia (Irawan, Muhammad Zudhy; Rizki, Muhammad; Joewono, Tri Basuki; Belgian, 2020). The physical distancing policy to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 shifts the order of people's lives and habits. The new normal era also requires humans to be able to make adjustments and adaptations in carrying out various life activities. Adaptation and adoption of digital technology are a necessity in facing the new normal era.

The emergence of the new normal era brought many changes in various activities of human life, including Islamic da'wah activities. Da'wah is an important concept in Islam which implies an obligation for all Muslims to convey Islamic messages to all mankind (Mohamad, Abu Darda; Nasir Badlihisam Mohd; Yusof, 2014). In da'wah activities, media or wasilah is needed as a tool to convey da'wah messages. The emergence of the new normal era is a

challenge as well as an opportunity for *da'i* (communicators) in da'wah activities. Da'i or da'wah interpreters are required to be able to adapt to utilize effective media in conveying da'wah messages to *mad'u* (communicants), one of which is da'wah by utilizing digital media, or called e-da'wah.

The use of digital media as a means of da'wah is a demand that cannot be avoided today. Therefore, da'wah activists must be able to carry out e-da'wah in the new normal era to give birth to virtual da'i who can spread Islam according to the developments and needs of the times. This is because Islam is a teaching that is always by the conditions of the times and places (Usman, 2016). New media or the internet provide great opportunities for da'wah activities in gaining market (*mad'u*). This is because the internet makes it easy for everyone to get information quickly and in real-time. Da'wah through digital media can also reach a wider target. This is because modern technology provides almost unlimited and instantaneous capabilities so that it can be connected to the whole world (DO, Roslyn L. Gerwin; MD, Kristopher Kaliebe; DO, 2018).

On the other hand, e-da'wah activities must also be accompanied by the digital literacy skills of the da'i. There are three conceptions of digital literacy development, namely digital natives, skills-based, and sociocultural perspectives (Lists, 2019). Digital literacy is important to master as an effort to strengthen e-da'wah in the new normal era so that da'wah activities remain following Islamic corridors and sharia. The principles of delivering da'wah material online must be a concern for virtual preachers (online media preachers). This is so that e-da'wah can achieve the desired goal, namely changing honey to be better cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally. The phenomenon of e-da'wah in the new normal era raises a new problem, namely the da'i's digital literacy ability which is not sufficient so that the da'wah activities carried out cannot run optimally.

Based on the results of initial observations at the research location, namely in the Jintap area of Ponorogo, it is known that the da'wah activist group already has online da'wah facilities. They also already have a Baiturrahman TV YouTube channel which was created as a response to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The YouTube channel was created for online da'wah activities during the pandemic to implement government policies related to physical distancing. The conditions that occurred, for 8 months Baiturrahman TV's YouTube channel only contained some da'wah content. This is an indicator that there is no consistency for da'wah activists to carry out da'wah online. Even some of the image quality in the uploaded da'wah content is not good, including the virtual preacher who appears to be less communicative. The results of the initial interview revealed that the human resources of the preacher who mastered digital technology at Jintap Ponorogo were very limited. So online da'wah activities only last 1 month with various content limitations. This condition raises a new problem in e-da'wah activities at Jintap Ponorogo which should be a solution in da'wah activities in the new normal era. The *da'i's* digital literacy ability is the basic capital in carrying out da'wah online.

Research on the phenomenon of e-da'wah in the new normal era is important as an effort to explore the digital literacy experience of virtual preachers in carrying out online da'wah activities in the new normal era.

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Literature review

Research on the phenomenon of e-da'wah has been carried out with a focus on e-da'wah in virtual pesantren with the results of the study informing that e-da'wah through virtual boarding schools is a very innovative thing so that many users visit or become members of virtual boarding schools, besides virtual boarding schools become agents religious information service that is open to all people (Akhmad, 2009). Another research was conducted with the theme of e-da'wah as an alternative medium for da'wah. The results show that e-da'wah has several benefits, for example, da'wah has a wider and longer reach, e-da'wah is also able to present the true face of Islam and develop the image of Islam (Mulyanto, 2006). Furthermore, research on da'wah through new media has also been conducted on the topic of new media and its effect on da'wah. The results of the study indicate that the rise of Islamic proclamations in the new media gives an impression of da'wah, especially in the aspect of accepting Islamic understanding related to aqidah, worship and morals among internet users (Borham, 2018). In line with these three studies, this study seeks to explore further about the phenomenon of e-da'wah in the new normal era, namely about the digital literacy experience of virtual preachers in carrying out da'wah activities through online media.

Da'wah is an encouragement or suggestion for humans to invite goodness and prevent evil. The emergence of the new normal era requires Islamic da'wah activities to be able to adapt. Self-adjustment of da'wah activities is important to avoid being surprised by the emergence of a new normal phenomenon so that Islamic da'wah remains relevant and effective. One thing that can be done is e-da'wah, namely da'wah activities using information and communication technology in the form of the internet or new media. The existence of innovative models and da'wah media are alternatives in packaging da'wah materials and messages more creatively and innovatively so that the delivery of da'wah messages becomes more attractive.

Based on the use of technology, da'wah methods can be classified into three types (Yoga S, 2015), namely conventional da'wah, *teleda'wah*, and *e-da'wah*. Conventional da'wah or *da'wah bil-lisan* is a da'wah carried out by direct or face-to-face meetings between the da'i (communicator) and mad'u (communicant). The next development is in the form of teledakwah, namely da'wah through communication technology and mass media such as radio, television, and print media. After teledakwah, e-da'wah emerged, namely da'wah with the help of the internet.

The use of digital media in da'wah activities requires the da'i's digital literacy skills. digital literacy is often used as a variant of media literacy, with research focusing more on its functional or critical dimensions (Polizzi, 2020). Digital literacy refers to the practical skills needed to use digital technology, including operational skills, information navigation, social skills, and creative skills (van Deursen, AJAM, Helsper, EJ, & Eynon, 2016). Digital media is a type of device in new media. In this study, what is meant by digital literacy is the ability and expertise of a preacher to utilize computers, the internet, and other digital tools as a means of supporting da'wah activities to be more optimal.

One of the elements of digital literacy is communication and collaboration (JISC, 2017). This element contains an understanding of the active participation of digital media users to

streamline time, this is closely related to media as a digital tool that has convergence (Stefany, Stella; Nurbani, 2017). Communication and collaboration have an individual competence component which consists of use skills which are the ability to access and operate media, critical understanding in the form of the ability to analyze and evaluate media content comprehensively, and communicative abilities, namely the ability to communicate and participate through media (Commission & Unit, 2009).

Research method

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to examine the phenomenon of e-da'wah in the new normal era. Phenomenology is generally known as an approach used to help understand various symptoms or phenomena of communication practices in society. The phenomenological tradition is concerned with the process of knowledge or understanding of a reality based on one's experience. Phenomenology is how human beings come to understand the world through direct experience (Littlejohn, Stephen w; Foss, Karen A; Oetzel, 2017). Schutz stated that in phenomenology to interpret concepts, one must carry out a phenomenological reduction process, namely freeing oneself from all theoretical and scientific prejudices about the world 'out there' and analyzing the meaning of phenomena as they are experienced (Anshori, 2018). This view of course differs from the positivist in that a theory must be in the form of a statement about the relationship among different variables from which hypotheses can be deduced (Buchanan, 1998). In phenomenology, researchers must start by looking at the phenomena experienced by the research subject.

The subjects in this study consisted of 3 preachers in Jintap Ponorogo who carried out da'wah activities virtually during the new normal era. Subject selection was carried out by purposive sampling, namely the determination of the subject based on certain considerations (Sugiyono, 2006). Based on this understanding, the researcher chose the research subject, namely preachers who run online da'wah in the new normal era and are willing to be asked for information regarding the experience of digital literacy in online da'wah activities. The research location is in Jintap Village, Ponorogo Regency. The location selection was based on the existence of a YouTube channel managed by the mosque *Takmir* as a response to the emergence of the new normal era and in that location da'wah was carried out online as an alternative model of da'wah in the new normal era.

The research stages are carried out by carrying out phenomenological research steps which consist of defining the research question, conducting a preliminary study, choosing a theory and using it as an assumption of reference, studying first-order construct, checking for unintended effects, and relating the evidence to the scientific literature and the empirical field of study (Aspers, 2009). In simpler terms, this research was carried out through 3 stages, namely the preparation, implementation, and reporting stages (engkus). In the preparation stage, the researcher collects basic philosophical knowledge about the phenomenon of e-da'wah in the new normal era, especially in the form of digital literacy experiences for preachers, including ontological, epistemological, and axiological aspects. Furthermore, for the implementation stage, the researcher conducted a literature search, and at the reporting stage, the researcher developed a report by the report format of the phenomenological approach (Kuswarno, 2007).

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After conducting in-depth observations and interviews, researchers constructed messages obtained from informants and mapped the e-da'wah phenomenon in the new normal era in the form of da'i digital literacy experiences, especially related to communication and collaboration elements in the form of active participation in digital networks for da'wah activities. The data analysis technique is carried out with three stages of data analysis: 1) data reduction, 2) data display, and 3) data conclusion according to the researcher's interpretation (Schwandt, 1986). Reduction is done by summarizing, choosing the main things, and focusing on the important things. Presentation of data in the form of brief descriptions, charts, relationships between categories, and the like. Conclusion drawing/verification is the third line in the data analysis technique after data reduction and presentation. The validity of the research data was carried out by triangulation. Triangulation is a way to get valid data by using multiple methods (Bachri, 2010). Triangulation of data in this research is a triangulation method which is done by combining observation and interview techniques and combining data sources from several research subjects.

Result and Discussion

In communication theory, seven traditions are the basis for understanding the symptoms of communication that occur in society. Craig explained that communication theory is a field of study that integrates seven traditions of thought with a shared focus on practical communication problems (Craig, RT, & Muller, 2007). One of the traditions contained in communication science is the phenomenological tradition. Phenomenology is generally known as an approach used to help understand various symptoms or phenomena of communication practices in society. Phenomenology Edmund Husserl designed the building of descriptive social theory and it was this that laid the foundation for important contributions to philosophy and the social sciences (Springborg, 2007).

Phenomenology has three basic principles, namely: 1) knowledge is found directly in conscious experience, an individual will know a phenomenon when directly involved in the phenomenon, 2) the meaning of something consists of the potential of it in an individual's life, how the individual relates to it. an object will determine its meaning, this meaning will vary from one individual to another depending on the potential and relevance of the object to himself, 3) language is an awareness of meaning, a person experiences the world through the language used to define and express that world (Deetz & SA, 1992).

The development of phenomenology is one of the fundamental research methods on assumptions that respect human uniqueness and subjective experience (Hasbiansyah, 2008). Griffin argues that in phenomenology researchers analyze everyday experiences from the point of view of the people who live them, and explore possibilities in understanding the experiences of self and others (Griffin, M; Ledbetter, Andrew; Sparks, 2019). The digital literacy experience of da'i in carrying out da'wah activities online is part of the e-da'wah phenomenon in the new normal era. This is because da'wah activities, which are usually carried out face-to-face in the form of *halaqah* or meetings, must now be packaged with a more effective and efficient model by conducting alternative models of da'wah online. The research on the digital literacy experience of the preacher becomes a study in phenomenological research. Da'i directly experiences e-da'wah activities in the face of the new normal era.

One of the elements in digital literacy that is the focus of this research is communication and collaboration. This element contains an understanding of the active participation of digital media users in this case a virtual preacher to carry out da'wah activities online. The elements of communication and collaboration that will be explored by virtual preachers who are the research subjects consist of individual competence components including use skills which are the ability to access and operate media, critical understanding in the form of the ability to analyze and evaluate media content comprehensively and communicative abilities, namely the ability to communication and participation through the media, especially online media.

To analyze the digital literacy experience of virtual preachers in carrying out da'wah activities online, it can be identified through three categories, namely skills (use skills), critical understanding (critical understanding), and communicative abilities (communicative abilities) (Commission & Unit, 2009). The individual abilities of the virtual preachers at Jintap Ponorogo are presented in table 1:

Table 1. Individual Competence of Virtual Da'i at Jintap Ponorogo

No.	Category Individual Competence	Level	Indikator
1.	<i>Use Skill</i>	<i>Basic</i>	Research subjects have very basic skills in using digital media, and are still in the process of adapting in carrying out da'wah online.
2.	<i>Critical Understanding</i>	<i>Medium</i>	Research subjects can understand the content, function, and regulation of the use of digital media, but the willingness to cross-check information is lacking.
3.	<i>Communicative abilities</i>	<i>Basic</i>	Research subjects have not been able to communicate and actively participate in their digital media, the consistency of the use of digital media for da'wah activities is also still very lacking.

The data presented in Table 2 is the level of competence which refers to the level of digital literacy ability *European Commission Directorate General Information Society and Media*(2009).

Table 2. Level of Competence

<i>Level</i>	<i>Definition</i>
<i>Basic</i>	Individuals have a set of abilities that enable the basic use of media. There is limited media use. Users know their basic functions, use them for specific purposes, and to define tools. The capacity of users to critically analyze the information received is still limited.
<i>Medium</i>	Individual communicative ability through media is also limited. Individuals who are fluent in the use of media, know their functions, and can operate them, are more complex. Expanded use of media. The user knows how to obtain and evaluate the information he or she needs, as well as evaluate (and improve) information-seeking strategies.
<i>Advanced</i>	Individuals are very active in the use of media, aware of and interested in laws affecting its use. Users have in-depth knowledge of techniques and language and can analyze (and, ultimately) change conditions that affect communicative relationships and the creation of messages. In the social field, users can activate cooperation groups that allow them to solve problems.

Sources: European Commission Directorate General Information Society and Media; Media Literacy Unit, 2009

The first digital literacy criterion is the use of skills. Use skills are skills in accessing and operating media activities. Use skills have three criteria, namely skills in using media in a standard (low) standard, skills actively in using media, and high skills in using and utilizing media. Indicators of skills or use skills, especially on the use of computers and internet access, consist of ownership of a computer/laptop; use of computers/laptops; ownership of social media and e-mail accounts; frequently visited sites; downloads, and uploads.

Researchers collected data and it was found that online da'wah or da'wah activities were carried out by da'i at Jintap Ponorogo as a response to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Efforts to package da'wah online are carried out so that da'wah activities can still run in a new normal situation which requires every interaction to be carried out by implementing health protocols. Based on observations, it was found that the research subjects,

namely the da'i at Jintap Ponorogo had never used digital media for da'wah activities before the COVID-19 pandemic emerged. Access to digital media is limited to personal use.

In carrying out da'wah online through the only digital media owned, namely the YouTube channel Baiturrahman TV, several obstacles were found, firstly, the understanding of the da'i about the concept of e-da'wah or da'wah through online media is still very low. This is because the da'i are used to carrying out da'wah activities face-to-face. The second obstacle is the weak management of digital media management, namely the lack of consistency and sustainability of online da'wah. Online da'wah activities only last for 1 month, namely at the beginning of the emergence of policies regarding physical distancing and the presence of the new normal era. The third obstacle is the lack of communicative ability of the da'i in da'wah through digital media. This is because da'i feel awkward and are not used to digital media to carry out da'wah activities.

The limitations of digital literacy capabilities have made online da'wah activities at Jintap Ponorogo unable to be carried out optimally. Whereas da'wah methods that can be done via the internet are such as website facilities, mailing lists by inviting religious discussions or sending moral messages to all members, chat facilities that allow for direct interaction, blog facilities, and social networking facilities, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Messenger, BBM, Instagram, line and so on (Sadly, 2018).

The second category of individual competence is critical understanding, which is the ability to analyze and evaluate media content extensively and completely. The criteria for this critical understanding include the ability to understand the content and function of the media, knowledge of the media and media rules or regulations, as well as the behavior of media users in utilizing the media. Criteria for critical understanding include the informant's trust in the mass media or the internet; ability to distinguish the truth of news site content; ability to understand government regulations related to media; and check news sources.

Based on the results of the interviews, it is known that the research subjects can analyze and evaluate media content, especially those from digital media, although not comprehensively. The research subjects have been able to understand the content and function of the media and use it as a source of information in da'wah activities in addition to sources in the form of books and references from various other sources that are considered credible. Besides that, the research subjects also know media although not all of them understand media regulation, especially in Indonesia. The research subjects also do not always cross-check news sources. Researchers found that research subjects were able to take advantage of their YouTube channel to present more creative and innovative da'wah as an alternative to da'wah models in the new normal era, although consistency was still very lacking. Based on the results of previous research, it is known that the application of e-da'wah in religious activities is an adaptation of new habits that must be immediately started by mosques (Putra et al., 2020).

The third category of individual competence is communicative abilities or communication skills, namely skills in communicating and participating through (digital) media channels. Communication skills are skills in building social relationships and participating in the environment through media channels. In addition, communication skills

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also include skills in compiling media content. The communicative abilities indicator consists of updating information on the internet and discussing it through the comments column.

Based on the results of observations and interviews, it was found that communication skills on the internet were limited to content posting activities on the Baiturrahman TV YouTube channel. Da'i does not carry out content uploading himself but is accompanied by a special team. This shows that the da'i's communication skills through the Internet are very limited. Coupled with the deactivation of the comment column on the Baiturrahman TV YouTube channel which in the end limits the interaction between the preacher and his mad'u. Virtual preachers must understand that interaction in digital media is important. Social networks are one of the most crucial communication media used between individuals and organizations around the world today, as a medium for sharing and disseminating information (Omar et al., 2015).

The reference used to determine the ability of da'i in Jintap Ponorogo to use and utilize digital media is based on criteria determined by the European Commission, Directorate General of Public Information and Media; The Media Literacy Unit was subsequently converted and adapted to social conditions in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This research has succeeded in analyzing the digital literacy experience of da'i in carrying out da'wah activities online. The results of research that focus on elements of communication and collaboration skills show that the use skills of preachers at Jintap Ponorogo are at a basic level, this is because preachers only have basic skills in utilizing digital media for da'wah activities. In the critical understanding category, the da'i are at the intermediate level, which is indicated by the ability of the preacher to understand digital media content and regulations by utilizing information from digital media for sources of da'wah content, even though the preacher has not checked the veracity of the information source. Furthermore, in the communicative abilities category, preachers are at the basic level because they have not been able to communicate actively in online media. The theoretical contribution of this research is expected to contribute ideas in the development of communication science, especially related to digital literacy, practically it is expected to be able to contribute to virtual preachers especially in Jintap Ponorogo Village to be able to optimize e-da'wah activities in the new normal era. Research on the phenomenon of e-da'wah with a wider scope needs to be done to see the development of e-da'wah, especially in the new normal era.

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