



DIGITAL DAWAH AND PROPHETIC PRINCIPLES IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA: MEDIA LITERACY AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES

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Abstract

Social media made it easy to spread Islamic knowledge across the world. In earlier periods, seekers of knowledge used to travel miles to learn from recognized scholars. Today, digital platforms have made Islamic knowledge accessible within seconds. Digital dawah has reached audiences across geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries. This accessibility has created new challenges concerning the authenticity and ethical communication of religious knowledge. In earlier times, misinformation required considerable effort to produce and circulate. Meanwhile, digital platforms allow false information, AI-generated videos and inaccurate religious interpretations to reach large audiences with a single click. This study examines two questions, what challenges does contemporary Digital Dawah create for the authenticity and ethical communication of Islamic knowledge? How can Prophetic principles of Dawah and media literacy contribute to responsible Digital Dawah and conflict resolution? Using a qualitative, literature based approach, the study analyzes Islamic sources and existing literature on Digital Dawah, media literacy, misinformation and conflict resolution. The analysis indicates that access to Islamic information without the ability to critically evaluate its source, validity, context and implications can contribute to misinformation, misunderstanding and conflict. It further highlights that the competitive nature of social media may encourage harsh language, disrespect toward scholars and claims of interpretive exclusivity. The study concludes that Digital Dawah should integrate authentic Islamic knowledge, media literacy, respectful communication and conflict sensitive approaches to promote mutual understanding and social harmony.

Keywords *Digital Dawah, Media Literacy, Misinformation, Prophetic Methodology, Conflict Resolution*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Dawah is the call to believe in Allah and follow His Islamic law. It also includes calling people to believe in the Prophet Muhammad and follow his Sunnah. Islam encourages Dawah extensively and every Muslim has an obligation to engage in it, although to varying degrees depending on one's ability, knowledge and position in society (Srigita & Rifa'i, 2025). Allah and His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad commanded believers to undertake Dawah on numerous occasions. Allah says in the Qur'an: "And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah and does righteousness and says, 'Indeed, I am of the Muslims'?" (Qur'an 41:33). The Prophet said: "By Allah, that Allah guides a man through you is better for you than a herd of expensive red camels" (Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 2406).

Modern resources have transformed Dawah into digital platforms, especially social media. Social media allows Dawah to be delivered more widely and quickly, without cultural, geographical or linguistic boundaries. According to recent research, almost 5.79 billion people use social media (Kepios, 2026) showing that this platform has great potential to be used as a means of spreading Islamic teachings. Social media makes access to Islamic knowledge possible within a click, and people no longer have to travel miles to

gain knowledge. Social media also allows direct interaction between scholars and audiences through comments, private messages and online discussions, which is not possible through traditional Dawah methods (Hidayat & Nuri, 2024).

However, Digital Dawah also presents its own challenges. A recent systematic literature review synthesizing 35 peer-reviewed studies on Islamic Dawah in the digital era offers a useful framework for understanding these challenges. The review identifies four primary categories of obstacles confronting Digital Dawah, the proliferation of misinformation, challenges in verifying religious content, the commercialization of religious messages and barriers created by platform algorithms (Manaf et al., 2026). Notably, this body of research points to what has been described as a “digital dawah paradox”, the same platform features that enable religious messages to reach wider and more diverse audiences also create the conditions under which misinformation spreads, scholarly authority is undermined and religious discourse becomes fragmented (Manaf et al., 2026). These four obstacles form the basis of the challenges examined in this study, each of which is addressed in relation to a corresponding Prophetic principle of Dawah. Similar sentiments are shared by Marzuki, who pointed out that digital da'wah activities tend to emphasize sensationalism and provocation rather than the wisdom and courteousness depicted in the teachings of the Qur'an, and who advocated for improving Islamic digital literacy alongside the soft communicative approach of the Prophet (Marzuki et al., 2025).

This study examines two questions. First, what challenges does contemporary Digital Dawah create for the authenticity and ethical communication of Islamic knowledge? Second, how can Prophetic principles of Dawah and media literacy contribute to responsible Digital Dawah and conflict resolution? Considerable work has already been done on the ethical and communicative dimensions of digital dawah; however, existing work tends to focus on challenges within Muslim communities themselves such as sectarian disagreement or guidance for new Muslims rather than on conflict and misunderstanding that extends into multicultural and interfaith settings. This study addresses that gap by examining how specific Prophetic principles of Dawah, namely wisdom (hikmah), gentleness (rifq), gradualism (tadarruj) and verification (tabayyun) combined with media literacy can be applied as a structured approach to conflict resolution in digital religious discourse within multicultural societies.

Prophet Muhammad is the best example for all of us to follow, as Allah clearly states in the Qur'an: “Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example” (Qur'an 33:21). Prophet Muhammad was the master communicator; his sunnah offers examples of Dawah drawn from personal life to ensure that the message of Allah reaches diverse audiences. He understood the importance of dialogue and engagement with people of different faiths (Rahman & Muhit, 2025). By following these principles, we can make modern digital platforms a better place for Dawah.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative, literature-based research design to examine the challenges of Digital Dawah and relevance of Prophetic principles and media literacy in

addressing them. Rather than collecting primary empirical data, the study relies on the analysis of two categories of sources: primary Islamic textual sources including relevant verses of the Qur'an and authenticated Hadith concerning Prophetic methodology of Dawah, and secondary academic literature addressing Digital Dawah, online religious authority, media literacy, misinformation and conflict resolution in multicultural contexts.

Secondary sources were identified through database searches on Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and Scopus indexed journals, using keyword combinations such as “Digital Dawah,” “Islamic communication,” “media literacy,” “religious misinformation,” and “online religious conflict.” Priority was given to peer reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings and scholarly books published within the last ten years alongside foundational classical Islamic texts and systematic literature reviews where the discussion concerns established Prophetic principles or documented patterns across the wider field. Sources not published in English or such online content that is not peer reviewed and materials lacking clear authorship or institutional affiliation were excluded, except where used explicitly as illustrative real world examples.

Primary Islamic textual sources were selected based on their direct relevance to the four challenges identified in the reviewed literature. Qur'anic verses were referenced using the Sahih International translation while Hadith were verified for authenticity (Sahih or Hasan grading) using established hadith reference databases before inclusion.

The analysis followed a thematic approach that recurring challenges across the secondary literature were first identified and categorized after which corresponding Qur'anic and Hadith texts addressing each identified challenge were selected and analyzed. This process allowed each challenge to be paired with a specific Prophetic principle capable of addressing it, forming the structured framework presented in the Results section.

RESULTS

The thematic analysis of the reviewed literature and Islamic textual sources identified four major challenges associated with Digital Dawah. Each challenge corresponds to a specific Prophetic principle capable of addressing it. These findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Challenges of Digital Dawah and Corresponding Prophetic Principles

Challenges Digital Dawah	in Prophetic Principle	Hadith Basis
Misinformation proliferation	Verification (Tabayyun)	“Whoever ascribes to me what I have not said, let him occupy his seat in the fire.” (Sahih Bukhari, Book 3, Hadith No. 109)
Content verification challenges	Consulting people of knowledge	“It is enough of a lie for a man to narrate everything he hears.” (Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 5)

Challenges Digital Dawah	in Prophetic Principle	Hadith Basis
Commercialization of religious messages	Sincerity (Ikhlas)	“If anyone acquires knowledge that should be sought seeking the Face of Allah, but he acquires it only to get some worldly advantage, he will not experience the fragrance of Paradise.” (Sunan Abi Dawud, Hadith No. 3664)
Algorithmic barriers	Sincerity and Wisdom	“Whoever seeks knowledge to impress the scholars, to argue with the foolish, or to attract the attention of people, Allah will admit him into hellfire.” (Sunan Tirmidhi, Hadith No. 2654)

Regarding misinformation proliferation, tabayyun, verification and seeking clarification is a key principle in Islam. Scholars must take time to verify information before spreading it as spreading misinformation is considered a major sin in Islam (Hasanah, 2024). As Prophet Muhammad said, “Whoever ascribes to me what I have not said, then let him occupy his seat in the fire” (Sahih Bukhari, Book 3, Hadith No. 109).

Regarding verification challenges, in the globalized era of advanced technology there is an overflow of information but not all of it is valid and reliable. Individuals must be careful in receiving news and information and must validate it through reliable sources and people of knowledge (Noordin, 2019). As Prophet Muhammad said, “It is enough of a lie for a man to narrate everything he hears” (Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 5). One must verify information before spreading it.

Regarding the commercialization of Islamic messages, Islamic Dawah must not lose its spiritual foundation. Dawah is not a profession but an obligation upon every Muslim and must be carried out with wisdom, patience and sincerity; the most important aspect is sincerity of intention and humility in delivery (Pratiwi et al., 2025). Prophet Muhammad made this clear: “If anyone acquires knowledge that should be sought seeking the Face of Allah, but he acquires it only to get some worldly advantage, he will not experience the fragrance of Paradise” (Sunan Abi Dawud, Hadith No. 3664).

Regarding algorithmic barriers, the literature notes that platform algorithms reward sensational, emotionally charged or high-engagement content which can incentivize dawah creators to prioritize virality over accuracy or depth (Manaf et al., 2026). This is directly addressed by the Prophetic warning against seeking knowledge to attract attention or prominence, reinforcing sincerity of intention over engagement metrics.

In addition to their roots in Islamic texts, all four principles can be aligned with media literacy competencies. For example, tabayyun is equivalent to checking sources, consulting knowledgeable people is equivalent to assessing credibility and expertise, and Ikhlas is equivalent to recognizing motives both one's own and those of the content creator. This shows that rather than being alternative practices, the Prophetic principles and media

literacy practices require similar skills but differ mainly in the rationale behind them, namely religious duty versus civic duty (Namle, 2025).

Taken together, these findings suggest that each major challenge identified in the literature has a corresponding response rooted in Prophetic methodology, offering a structured foundation for the framework discussed in the following section.

Table 2. Documented Real-World Cases of Digital Dawah Challenges

Challenge	Real-World Case	Source
AI-generated religious misinformation	A network of accounts used deepfake videos and audios to spread apocalyptic religious propaganda, falsely depicting public figures endorsing claims about the Imam Mahdi.	VOA News, 2023
Monetized engagement-driven Islamophobic content	/An investigation documented a content creator using AI tools to mass-produce Islamophobic misinformation videos for ad revenue, exploiting platform engagement incentives.	McIntyre et al., 2026
Fabricated circulation	HadithA qualitative study of Arabic social media identified widespread circulation of fabricated quotes falsely attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, distinguishing users who spread such content from those who debunk it.	Fawzi et al., 2026

Table 2 presents documented cases that illustrate the challenges identified in Table 1, grounding the study's findings in concrete, observable instances. These cases demonstrate that the challenges of misinformation, algorithmic exploitation, and content fabrication are not merely theoretical concerns but are actively documented across digital and social media platforms, reinforcing relevance of Prophetic principles discussed as potential responses to these issues.

Regarding these three cases, each illustrates a distinct mechanism behind the challenges identified in Table 1. The AI generated misinformation case demonstrates how synthetic media can fabricate religious authority itself using deepfake audio and video to falsely suggest endorsement of apocalyptic claims by real public figures. The monetized Islamophobic content case shows how algorithmic incentive structures can be deliberately exploited for financial gain, producing inflammatory material at scale regardless of its social harm. The fabricated Hadith case offers empirical, quantitative confirmation of this dynamic. It was found that Hadith related content circulates on Arabic-language social media in high daily volume, with several fabricated Hadith deployments going viral and that accounts which frequently circulate such content tend to have weaker ties to formally

recognized Islamic scholarship than accounts that actively debunk it (Fawzi et al., 2026). Together, these three cases show that the challenges outlined in Table 1 are not confined to any single platform mechanism but also recur across generative AI, algorithmic monetization and organic peer-to-peer sharing alike.

DISCUSSION

Traditionally, dawah is carried out through lectures, recitation, or sermons in the masjid. However, over time, dawah has also undergone changes in approach and medium. In the modern era, dawah is often carried out through digital platforms such as social media, videos and podcasts that allow Islamic messages to spread widely (Srigita & Rifa'i., 2025). This raises our first research question: what challenges does contemporary Digital Dawah create for the authenticity and ethical communication of Islamic knowledge? The four main challenges discussed in this research are misinformation proliferation, content verification challenges, commercialization of Islamic knowledge and algorithmic barriers (Manaf et al., 2026).

These challenges together reveal a common underlying pattern that erosion of traditional accountability structures which once governed the transmission of Islamic knowledge. In earlier periods, religious knowledge passed through a recognized chain of scholarly verification, where authenticity, intention and context could be verified before information reached its audience. Digital platforms have removed this gatekeeping layer, allowing content to spread at a speed and scale that outpaces any meaningful verification process. This suggests that the core problem in Digital Dawah is not the technology itself but the absence of an accountability mechanism capable of matching its speed, a gap that the Prophetic principles examined in this study are positioned to address.

The first Prophetic principle addressing these challenges is verification, which directly responds to the problem of misinformation proliferation. Misinformation can weaken the function of dawah because unverified information causes misunderstanding and can even trigger social conflict, whereas dawah should be a source of enlightenment and unification that strengthens the bond of brotherhood rather than widening the gap between people. Dawah in the digital era requires not only communication skills and mastery of religious material, but also skill in utilizing technology while equipping audiences with digital literacy to select accurate and accountable information (Castrawijaya, 2023). Prophet Muhammad said: “Whoever lies upon me intentionally, then let him take his seat in the fire” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 109). Allah Himself commanded in the Qur'an: “O you who believe! If a person of bad character brings you any news, verify it, lest you harm people in ignorance and afterward become regretful for what you have done” (Qur'an 49:6). Islam encourages deliberation and thoughtfulness; a believer must be thoughtful about the information he believes and spreads. Prophet Muhammad said: “Deliberation is from Allah and hustle is from the devil” (Tirmidhi). The results show cases where accounts using AI-generated videos spread misinformation and made claims about the Imam Mahdi; in an age where misinformation spreads this way, media literacy is a major need of the time (VOA News, 2023).

The second challenge is content verification, since the traditional gatekeeping of scholarship is no longer present in the digital medium. Before the digital age, religious authority in Islam was established through recognized chains of transmitters, peer recognition of scholars, and demonstrated devotion to scholarly ethics (Lohlker & Wahid, 2026). In the digital world, anonymity and algorithmic spread have enabled people without formal credentials to produce Fatwa like content presented as authoritative (Atallah, 2026). Prophet Muhammad warned against spreading knowledge without verifying it: “It is enough of a lie for a man to narrate everything he hears” (Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 5). The Qur’anic instruction to consult the people of knowledge states: “And We sent not before you except men to whom We revealed [Our message]. So ask the people of the message if you do not know” (Qur’an 16:43). In media literacy terms, this principle corresponds to evaluating a source's credibility and expertise before accepting its claims, encouraging audiences to distinguish between visibility and authority, a distinction increasingly blurred in algorithmic digital spaces. This concern is not merely theoretical, the fabricated Hadith circulation documented in Table 2 illustrates precisely this danger, showing how statements falsely attributed to the Prophet Muhammad can spread widely online precisely because audiences lack a reliable means of verifying the credibility of the source presenting them.

The third and fourth challenge, commercialization of religious messages and algorithmic barriers are closely related as both are stemming from the same underlying pressure of prioritization of engagement and profit over sincerity of purpose. Studies of digital religious content demonstrate that social media has enabled a shift from an educational orientation toward an exploitative one, in which Qur’anic verses and Hadith are incorporated into product branding and promotional material to attract audiences and drive sales (Shirazi, 2016). This commercialization is compounded by platform algorithms, which reward sensational, emotionally charged or high engagement content regardless of accuracy or depth, incentivizing dawah creators to prioritize virality over substance (Manaf et al., 2026). The consequences of this dynamic are illustrated in Table 2 which shows an investigation into monetized Islamophobic AI content and it was found that creators are deliberately mass producing inflammatory material to exploit platform engagement incentives for advertising revenue, demonstrating how algorithmic reward structures can be manipulated for financial gain even at the expense of religious and social harm. Both challenges are directly addressed by the Prophetic principle of sincerity (ikhlas). The Prophet's warning that one who seeks knowledge “only to get some worldly advantage will not experience the fragrance of Paradise” (Sunan Abi Dawud, Hadith No. 3664), paired with his caution against seeking knowledge “to attract the attention of people,” together establish that the value of religious communication lies not in its visibility or profitability, but in the sincerity of intention behind it. In media literacy terms, this principle corresponds to critical self awareness of motive, encouraging both content creators and audiences to question whether religious content is shaped by genuine educational intent or by the incentive structures of the platform itself, a distinction that becomes increasingly difficult to make as commercial and algorithmic pressures intensify.

Beyond resolving challenges inherent within the Muslim community itself, the framework proposed in this study has particular significance for multicultural and multi faith environments, since the consequences of miscommunication are far more severe here than in intra faith disputes. While many studies of Digital Dawah challenges address problems arising in interaction among Muslims, the use of digital platforms exposes Islam related content to constant contact with people of other faiths and cultures (Manaf et al. 2026). The behavior patterns responsible for conflict within the Muslim community carry even greater potential to create misunderstanding in a multi faith context. For instance, gentleness (*rifq*) and wisdom (*hikmah*) are not only tools for correcting the mistakes of fellow Muslims; the Qur'anic statement, “Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best” (Qur'an 16:125), implies the necessity of applying these principles when interacting with non-Muslim audiences as well. This connects to broader scholarship on Islamic ethical disagreement. It is argued that *adab al-ikhtilaf*, the classical Islamic tradition governing respectful disagreement offers a culturally grounded framework for intercultural communication rooted in humility, synthesis and reasoned argumentation rather than polemics (Abdul-Jabbar 2026). Applied to Digital Dawah, this suggests that gentleness and wisdom are not simply etiquette recommendations but part of a deeper Islamic intellectual tradition for engaging difference constructively, whether that difference lies within Muslim community or across religious and cultural lines. When religious material in digital space is driven by algorithms' preference for sensation or created without consideration for the context of its intended audience, there is a real danger of perpetuating harmful stereotypes and exacerbating interfaith conflict, precisely what Prophetic methodology sought to avoid as seen in the proliferation of AI generated Islamophobic content noted in Table 2. Applying Prophetic methodology within this framework thus makes Digital Dawah a critical step toward conflict resolution.

These results both fit into and build on the existing literature on Digital Dawah and online religious authority. Manaf et al. (2026) showed that the spread of misinformation, difficulty in verifying information, commercialization and algorithm related issues are the main barriers to Islamic Dawah online. This research takes up that list of barriers as a starting point and builds upon it by offering a set of principle based approaches for addressing each barrier through a corresponding element of Prophetic methodology. The results also correspond with research showing that algorithm controlled digital environments exacerbate ideological polarization, the spread of misinformation, and the commodification of religious dialogue, and that call for an approach grounded in Islamic ethics and critical digital literacy, an approach this research offers through Prophetic textual sources (Al-Najmi et al., 2026). In addition, the results reflect observations concerning the nature of religious authority in online spaces, where the basis of authority is no longer academic credentials but the ability to reach people through algorithmic visibility and audience engagement (Lohlker & Wahid, 2026). The findings also relate to work on how the fast, platform-driven logic of online spaces undermines the deliberative, context based process of Islamic legal reasoning (Atallah, 2026); the present study's emphasis on gradualism and wisdom offers a Prophetic methodology for addressing this

problem. The overall conclusion from this comparative analysis is that, although the challenges of Digital Dawah have become well researched and the need for Islamic ethics based digital literacy frameworks has increased, relatively little research has been grounded in Prophetic texts.

This study's conclusions have implications for several parties in the digital dawah ecosystem. For content creators, the model indicates that fact checking before posting, citing scholarly sources, and reflecting on commercial and engagement motives is not only best practice but also follows from traditional Prophetic conduct. Platforms should be aware that religion related misinformation amplified by algorithms continues to be a problem across diverse settings, as shown, for example, in the context of Bangladesh, where engagement driven algorithms have proven tolerant of religious misinformation even though it contributes to tensions between communities (Al-Zaman, 2024). This means that when devising policies to moderate religious content, particular attention should be paid to the tension between engagement and accuracy. For educators and dawah organizations, this model may serve as a basis for designing programs that merge Islamic ethical grounding with digital literacy skills training.

However, this study has several limitations. First, because the research is literature based and qualitative in nature, its findings cannot be empirically verified. The proposed framework linking Prophetic principles to concrete challenges facing digital dawah has not been tested through fieldwork, surveys or observation of content creators and their audiences and should therefore be considered an area for future research. Second, the secondary literature including the cases used to support the arguments made in this study is drawn from credible sources but should be regarded as illustrative examples rather than a representative sample of digital dawah content. Moreover, the use of Qur'anic and Hadith sources is limited to the analytical framework developed for this study and cannot claim to encompass all possible interpretations of these principles as discussed across scholarly circles.

CONCLUSION

This research examined the challenges associated with the credibility and ethical nature of Digital Dawah as well as ways in which Prophetic Dawah principles and media literacy could assist in creating responsible digital religious communication and resolving conflict. Using the framework of a systematic literature review (Manaf et al., 2026), this paper outlined four significant challenges associated with Digital Dawah, the spread of misinformation, difficulties in content verification, the commodification of religious messages and algorithmic barriers. Importantly, all of these challenges share a common root, they indicate the decay of the accountability mechanisms that previously governed the spread of Islamic knowledge.

In this regard, this study highlighted specific Prophetic principles that provide a textually grounded framework for addressing these challenges. Tabayyun is used specifically to counter misinformation by holding the transmitter, rather than the recipient, responsible for accuracy. Consulting people of knowledge addresses the decline in scholarly credibility through qualification rather than popularity. Ikhlas addresses issues of

commercialization and algorithmic exploitation. It should be noted that this study's findings indicate that these Prophetic principles closely parallel existing media literacy competencies, namely verifying sources and evaluating credibility and motive (NAMLE, 2025).

In addition to resolving differences among members of the Muslim community, this framework becomes especially important in multicultural and interreligious contexts, where miscommunication may carry far graver consequences than disagreements among members of the same faith. Gentleness (*rifq*) and wisdom (*hikmah*), together with the broader principles of *adab al-ikhtilaf*, or ethical disagreement as developed within the Islamic tradition (Abdul-Jabbar, 2026), thus become not merely tools for addressing communication among fellow Muslims, but crucial means of engaging ethically with religiously diverse audiences online. Examples presented in this paper, including AI-generated religious misinformation, profit driven Islamophobia, and Hadith forgery illustrate the practical urgency of this framework.

In conclusion, this paper suggests that Digital Dawah should integrate authentic Islamic teachings, media literacy skill and ethics of Prophetic communication as three interrelated components. This is important given the practical implications of this combination for different stakeholders, including content creators, who can draw on Prophetic conduct while verifying information and maintaining sincerity, platforms, which must remain sensitive to the tension between engagement and truth embedded in their algorithmic reward systems and religious educators, who can train audiences to combine Islamic principles with digital literacy. Future research could empirically investigate how such a framework might be applied by content creators and consumers within digital dawah environments, and whether this approach holds beyond Arabic speaking and Sunni contexts.

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