

# Mediatization of Religion in the Digital Era: A Case Study of Habib Ja'far's "Login" Podcast in Religious, Media, and Community Relations

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## Info Artikel

## Abstract

### Keywords:

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### Kata kunci:

Mediatisasi agama, podcast, Habib Ja'far, dakwah digital, media dan masyarakat

This study explores the phenomenon of religious mediatization in the digital era through a case study of the "Login" podcast hosted by Habib Ja'far. The research focuses on how religious practices, clerical authority, and spiritual meanings are transformed through interaction with digital media logic. Employing a qualitative approach with discourse analysis and content observation, the study examines adaptive communication strategies in digital da'wah addressing younger audiences. Findings reveal that Habib Ja'far successfully constructs an inclusive dialogical space where religion emerges as an open, light, and contextually relevant narrative. In this sense, religious mediatization goes beyond message dissemination, becoming a negotiation of identity and authority within the digital public sphere.

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas fenomena mediatisasi agama di era digital melalui studi kasus podcast "Login" yang dipandu oleh Habib Ja'far. Fokus utama kajian ini adalah bagaimana praktik keagamaan, otoritas ulama, dan pemaknaan spiritualitas mengalami transformasi ketika berinteraksi dengan logika media digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif digunakan dengan analisis wacana dan observasi konten untuk menelusuri strategi komunikasi dakwah yang adaptif terhadap audiens muda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Habib Ja'far berhasil mengonstruksi ruang dialog yang inklusif, di mana agama tampil sebagai narasi yang terbuka, ringan, dan relevan dengan kehidupan sehari-hari. Mediatisasi agama dalam konteks ini bukan sekadar penyebaran pesan dakwah, tetapi juga negosiasi identitas dan otoritas keagamaan di ruang publik digital.

## INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes in the way people understand, access, and practice religion. Religion not only lives in a sacred space, but also is mediated through digital platforms that allow the reproduction of spiritual values in a more interactive and popular format (Campbell, 2013). This phenomenon shows what is called religious mediatization, which is the process when religious practices and authorities transform by following the logic of the media (Hjarvard, 2008). In the Indonesian context, the emergence of religious figures in the digital space such as Habib Ja'far through the podcast "Login" reflects a new form of dialogical, egalitarian, and contextual da'wah communication to the needs of the younger generation.

Conceptually, da'wah always occupies an important position in the social life of Muslims as a medium for the dissemination of moral values and teachings (Aziz, 2017; Al-Faruqi, 1982; Hamzah, 2020). However, in the era of digital media, da'wah has expanded its function from simply conveying religious messages to a space for negotiating meaning between religious texts and popular culture (Lövheim, 2012; Hutchings, 2017). Podcasts as a form of new media open the opportunities for the presence of da'wah that is more narrative, participatory, and relevant to the social dynamics of modern society (Evolvi, 2019).

Previous studies have highlighted how social media is transforming religious practices (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021), establishing new authorities in public religiosity (Hjarvard & Lövheim, 2012), as well as constructing spaces of digital spirituality (Cheong, 2020; Wagner, 2021). In the local context, research by Rahman (2020) and Anwar (2022) shows that digital da'wah is able to build emotional closeness between *dai* and audience through a relaxed and humanist communication style. Thus, this study aims to examine how Habib Ja'far, through the podcast "Login", constructs the relationship between religion, media, and society in the framework of religious mediatization in the digital era.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, because it aims to understand the phenomenon of religious mediatization deeply through the social, cultural, and media contexts that surround it. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a qualitative approach allows researchers to explore the meaning constructed by individuals or groups about a complex phenomenon. The case study was chosen because it provides a space to understand the dynamics of interaction between religion, media, and society through distinctive communicative experiences (Yin, 2018).

The object of this research is the podcast "Login" hosted by Habib Ja'far, which airs on various digital platforms such as YouTube and Spotify. The main data sources were obtained from the observation of the content of the selected episodes, discourse analysis of the da'wah narrative, religious symbols, and communication strategies used. In addition, the researchers also used secondary documentation in the form of articles, online interviews, and social media data to strengthen the findings.

Data analysis was carried out by following the steps of qualitative analysis according to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusion. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources and methods, as suggested by Moleong (2017), so the result of interpretation is objective and credible. With this method, the research is expected to be able to reveal how religious mediatization works

through Habib Ja'far's digital da'wah practice in forming new relationships between religion, media, and society in the digital era.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Mediatization of Religion and the Transformation of Da'wah in the Digital Era

The findings of the study show that Habib Ja'far's "Login" podcast has become a new space for the process of religious mediatization, which means that religious values, symbols, and authorities are reproduced by following the logic and format of digital media. Fakhruroji (2021) explained that religious mediatization is not only the use of media for da'wah, but also it is a process in which the media reshapes religious expression and meaning through a dialogical and narrative approach, Habib Ja'far presents religion as a flexible discourse, accessible across generations, and not trapped in the formalities of conventional da'wah.

In this context, da'wah is not only understood as delivering a single message from *dai* to the congregation, but also a space of mutual communication that allows the audience to participate in shaping religious meaning (Aziz, 2017; Hamzah, 2020). This shift is in line with Campbell's (2013) idea of digital religion, where religious experience is inseparable from the media structure that shapes it. Habib Ja'far through "Login" combines elements of spirituality, humor, and social experience to present a more humanistic da'wah message.

### 2. Da'wah Communication Strategies in the "Login" Podcast

Analysis of several episodes shows that Habib Ja'far's da'wah strategy is based on three main approaches: (1) humanization of religious messages, (2) contextualization of social issues, and (3) cross-value dialogue. Humanization can be seen from the way he conveys Islamic teachings in popular and light language. It is adjusted to digital audiences who tend to seek emotional connection (Rahman, 2020). In one of the episodes themed "*Ngaji tanpa Judging*", Habib Ja'far emphasized that da'wah should guide, not judge. This approach signifies a transformation of the da'wah paradigm from dogmatic to empathetic (Anwar, 2022).

The contextualization of social issues arises when he discusses daily topics such as tolerance, love, work, and mental health with an open Islamic perspective. It shows that digital da'wah is not separated from social reality anymore, but it is present as a medium for the liberation of human values (Evolvi, 2019). On the other hand, cross-value dialogue is shown through the involvement of guests from various backgrounds of artists, activists, and non-Muslims who create a discursive space across identities. This phenomenon reflects the concept of religious hybridity (Lövheim, 2012), which means that religious experience is the result of interaction between culture, media, and spirituality.

### 3. Digital Da'wah and Religious Authority Negotiation

One of the important aspects of religious mediatization is the change in the structure of authority. If the da'wah authority was previously sourced from formal religious institutions, recently the authority is also built through digital credibility and emotional closeness (Hjarvard, 2008). Habib Ja'far appears not only as a scholar, but also as a public figure who understand popular culture. In this context, religious authority is the result of the interaction between religious knowledge, communication skills, and personal attractiveness (Hutchings, 2017).

Fakhruroji (2021) emphasized that the mediatization of religion has implications for the "symbolic autonomy" of religion, where the media does not only serve as a tool, but also an agent that remediates the legitimacy of authority. These findings are reinforced by the research of Hjarvard and Lövheim (2012) which shows that digital media plays a role as an arena for the formation of new religious identities that are more personal and reflective. In Indonesian context, Habib Ja'far's position represents a da'wah influencer figure who has succeeded in bridging the Islamic scientific tradition with the needs of digital audiences.

### 4. Digital Public Space and Religious Participation

The "Login" podcast also shows that digital public spaces can be new platforms for open and participatory religious expression. Audience's comments on YouTube columns, for example, often contain reflections, outpourings of spiritual experiences, or lighthearted discussions about the teachings of Islam they understand. This phenomenon supports Cheong's (2020) idea of digital spiritual publics, which means a space where people build spiritual communities based on communication equality.

Habib Ja'far does not position himself as the only source of truth, but as a facilitator of dialogue. This creates a more democratic da'wah relationship, in contrast to the one-way lecture model in traditional media (Wagner, 2021). On the other hand, digital platforms such as podcasts provide space for religious narratives that are not tied to a specific institution, but it grows organically according to the needs of the audience (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021).

### 5. Mediatization as a Space for Identity Negotiation

The process of mediatization in the "Login" podcast shows that religion does not lose its sacredness, but it conforms to the logic of the media to keep being relevant. Fakhruroji (2021) calls it as an adaptive process of religiosity, which means that religious expressions transform without eliminating spiritual substance. In Habib Ja'far's case, Islamic values such as compassion, tolerance, and simplicity are packaged in a popular language that can reach a wide audience, including those who were previously far from the formal da'wah space.

This approach is in line with the idea of Al-Faruqi (1982) that da'wah should function as a means of *islah al-mujtama'* (improvement of society), not only a verbal ritual. Therefore, digital da'wah becomes a social process that connects divine messages with modern human reality (Hamzah, 2020). The mediatization of religion through podcasts shows that nowadays, religiosity is not only practiced in mosques, but also in virtual spaces that are full of interaction and creativity (Evolvi, 2019).

#### 6. Implications for Religious, Media, and Community Relations

The findings of this study show three important implications. First, digital media acts as a space for recontextualizing religious values, where Islamic messages are conveyed through narratives that are more relevant to contemporary social issues. Second, the structure of religious authority has become more fluid, since legitimacy comes not only from the background of religious education, but also from communicative abilities and moral integrity. Third, the community plays an active role in the process of forming religious meaning. It makes da'wah to be a social dialogue that continues to develop.

Thus, the phenomenon of “Login” podcast reflects the new face of da'wah in the digital era which shows that religion does not lose its meaning, but finds a new form that is more contextual and inclusive. As stated by Fakhruroji (2021), religious mediatization is a reflective process that requires media literacy skills for *dai* to be able to convey divine messages with sensitivity to digital culture. Therefore, the results of this study confirm that the success of da'wah in the digital era is highly dependent on the ability of religious scholars and communicators to read the logic of the media and establish social closeness with their audiences.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the phenomenon of religious mediatization in the digital age marks a fundamental change in the way people understand, express, and interact with religious values. First, in terms of da'wah transformation, Habib Ja'far is able to present a humanistic and contextual da'wah communication model. He packs religious messages through lighthearted narratives, humor, and daily experiences without losing spiritual substance. Second, from the aspect of religious authority, this study shows that the legitimacy of *ulama* in the digital space is built not only from scientific capacity, but also from communicative capabilities and personal credibility. Third, from the perspective of the relationship between religion, media, and society, this study emphasizes that digital media plays a role not only as a means of spreading da'wah, but also as an arena of symbolic mediation where religious meanings are constructed together. The “Login” podcast serves as a digital public space where people can participate.

This phenomenon can be a mirror of how religion in Indonesia is transforming creatively, adaptively, and progressively to face the changing of era. The mediatization of religion is not a threat to the purity of religious values, but an opportunity to present a peaceful, open, and contextual face of Islam. The implications of this research lead to the importance of media literacy for *dai* and religious institutions, so that they can adapt to the new communication patterns without losing spiritual depth. Da'wah in the future will increasingly depend on the ability of religious communicators to utilize the media not only as a broadcasting tool, but also as a transformative spiritual encounter space.

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