

Future Teachers' Involvement in *Da'wah* Through Social Media

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Abstract

Da'wah is carried out through a variety of methods including social media which facilitates the dissemination of Islam in an interesting and efficient manner. The objective of this study is to determine the involvement of future teachers in *da'wah* through social media. Respondents were future teachers from an Institute of Teacher Education. Data is collected quantitatively and is supported by qualitative data. Findings show, future teachers strongly agreed that social media enables them to be involved in *da'wah* to form a wider network of friends, increase their own knowledge on Islam, receive Islamic messages, share knowledge on Islam, discuss with knowledgeable friends on religious issues, encourage polite interaction among group members of a social media and look for friends to work together in *da'wah* activities. The implication is, lecturers can guide future teachers to improve on their *da'wah* skills so that through the use of social media, their *da'wah* is more effective.

Keywords: involvement in *da'wah*, dissemination of Islam, social media, receiving messages, discussion on religious issues

Abstrak

Da'wah dilaksanakan dengan pelbagai cara termasuk melalui media sosial yang memudahkan penyebaran Islam secara menarik dan efisien. Kajian ini bertujuan menentukan penglibatan bakal guru dalam berdakwah melalui media sosial. Data dikumpulkan secara kuantitatif dan disokong oleh data kualitatif. Responden ialah bakal guru daripada sebuah Institut Pendidikan Guru. Data dikutip secara kuantitatif dan disokong oleh kualitatif data. Dapatan menunjukkan, bakal guru sangat setuju bahawa media sosial membolehkan mereka terlibat dalam *da'wah* untuk membentuk rangkaian rakan yang lebih luas, meningkatkan ilmu mereka sendiri tentang Islam, menerima mesej *da'wah*, berkongsi ilmu tentang Islam, membincangkan isu-isu keagamaan dengan rakan-rakan yang arif, menggalakkan interaksi bersopan dalam kalangan ahli kumpulan sosial media dan mencari rakan-rakan untuk bekerjasama dalam aktiviti *da'wah*. Implikasinya, pensyarah boleh membimbing bakal guru memperbaiki kemahiran *da'wah* supaya melalui penggunaan media sosial *da'wah* mereka menjadi lebih berkesan.

Kata Kunci: penglibatan dalam *da'wah*, penyebaran Islam, media sosial, penerimaan mesej, perbincangan isu-isu keagamaan

Introduction

Da'wah is the act of preaching to all mankind to return to Allah with great wisdom and to remind them of leaving the darkness of ignorance to the light of Islam until they believe in only Allah (Zanirah, Badriah & Norazmila, 2018). *Da'wah* is carried out in various forms, such as through places of worship like

mosques and via educational places such as educational institutions. Besides face-to-face interactions, *da'wah* is also delivered through social media. Social media allows one to seek, retrieve, communicate and disseminate information from a variety of sources. The advantages offered by social media have to be used effectively to convey the message of *da'wah*.

According to Faradillah Iqmar (2014), *da'wah* is one of the successful activities implemented through social media whereby renowned preachers also use this method. Social media has become more than just how people around the world keep in touch with their friends through online, rather, it has changed the way people communicate in their daily life (Faradillah Iqmar, Azlili, Iza Sharina & Nor Hafizah, 2014). Social media has been well used as a field for *da'wah* in helping spread more peaceful as well as relevant and good information on religion and related topics (Ridwan, 2015). Hence, social media enables any information sharing activities to take place such as sharing interests, current issues and sharing for *da'wah* purposes.

This study was conducted at one of the Institutes of Teacher Education in Malaysia in order to determine the involvement of future teachers in the use of social media for *da'wah*. Respondents were future teachers of the Bachelor's Degree in Education Programme. The institute has produced teachers who are not only capable of educating pupils in schools but also practicing *da'wah*. While studying, future teachers can also use the social media to build a sound relationship with lecturers and friends and to preach through *da'wah*. The findings from this study is significant for future actions. One of its implications is, lecturers can guide future teachers to preach in a systematic, interesting and efficient manner for the purpose of disseminating Islam more effectively.

Problem Statement

An aspiration of the Ministry of Education (MOE), as stated in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Ministry of Education, 2015) is, "to have an education that gives children shared values and experience by embracing diversity". One of the ways to realize this aspiration is by enabling future teachers to equip themselves with the necessary skills to explore, access information and apply knowledge for *da'wah* through social media. In this respect, Muhammad Anshar (2015) emphasizes the need for Muslims to make use of the on-line media as a means of *da'wah* to reach out global audience, and to overcome confronting obstructions due to the limits of distance, time and space. Thus, it is necessary to identify to what extent is the involvement of future teachers on the use of social media for *da'wah* as a basis for lecturers to guide them towards effective on-line *da'wah* activities.

Research Objectives

This study is undertaken with the aim to determine the involvement of future teachers on the use of social media for *da'wah*.

Research Questions

1. To what extent is the involvement of future teachers in *da'wah* through social media?

Literature Review

Da'wah is an Arabic word which has the literal meaning of issuing a summons or making an invitation. It is normally used to describe how Muslims teach others about the beliefs and practices of Islamic faith. *Da'wah* is as an effort for the improvement of people's lives and to provide assistance and guidance for those who wish to be closer to Allah. Arifuddin (2016) literally defines *da'wah* as something that encourages and attracts people's attention to certain messages due to the fascinating ways with which

such messages are sounded or delivered. Allah instructs believers to "Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious. For your Lord knows best who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance" (An-Nahl: 125). In the *Qur'an* it explains that the prophets are the messengers of God, whose responsibilities were to deliver faith and proper ways of life to all humankind and to avoid moral decadence among humans. Thus, *da'wah* is an invitation to the path of Allah based on the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. Messages of faith and appropriate conducts can be delivered through *da'wah*.

Regarding the definition of social media, Johari, Roseli and Azeman (2016) defines it as service based on the Internet that grant people to connect with the other user for sharing the connection within the system while allowing people to design a limited profile. Social media is one of the most crucial used communication media (Nassar, Hayajneh & Almsafir, 2013) to share and disseminate information between individuals and organizations across the world. Social media has also the potential to facilitate *da'wah* and has been rapidly utilized worldwide. In this respect, Faradillah Iqmar (2014) stresses that the advantages offered by social media have to be used effectively to convey the message of *da'wah* and currently, *da'wah* is one of the successful activities implemented through social media by renowned preachers like Mufti Menk, whose speeches and lesson sessions, uploaded through social media, won the hearts of many viewers. Similarly, Zanirah, Badriah and Norazmila (2018) suggest, preachers need to escape the scope of sentiment, emotion, public speaking and writing to the scope of planning, organizing, programming, preparing and building proposals and charities to restore the glory of Islam as in the days of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and his companions.

Da'wah through social media is among the manifestations of the Qur'anic verses. In Surah Ali Imran verse 110, Allah says, "You are the best nation brought forth for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient. In addition, the Prophet says, "Enlighten people with knowledge from me even if it is only one verse." Accordingly Ali (2017) propose, since Islam is a responsive religion to all changes and circumstances, it is time to evaluate the traditional *da'wah* whereby preaching is done by the use of oral media namely sermons or lectures. *Da'wah* should be developed in a wider context and must be able to penetrate the cyber world in order to sow the seeds of Islam. *Da'wah* using Internet is often called the *eda'wah* or electronic *da'wah*, where *da'wah* is hoped to be more developed and more diversified, especially for the Internet users. Furthermore, Zanirah, Badriah and Norazmila (2018) clarify that *da'wah* is meant to bring mankind to salvation, goodness and happiness either for the sake of present life in this world or later in the hereafter.

Pertaining to the use of theory in a research, Simon (1994) insists that it is crucial for social work practitioners to learn theoretical knowledge because theory can serve as an anchoring frame and a conceptual screen for case assessment, causal explanation, intervention planning, and outcome evaluation. This study is based on the Uses & Gratifications Theory which is one of the most influential theories in the field of mass media. According to Chen (2010), the theory is designed to describe the receiving process in mass communication and explaining the use of media by numerous audiences. This theory focuses more on what the audience do with media in achieving their needs and interests. It also provides an alternative way of looking at the relationship between media content and the audience, where people nowadays use the social media to interact with others and to seek information or content provided in the social media page. When they get to read some message or advice shared by their favourite profiles, the action somehow gratifies them.

Many researchers have identified the use of social media for various purposes. Alhababi, Alfadil, Alzamanan & Williams (2015) investigate the use of social media by college students for educational or learning purposes. The interest in their research is in functioning social media to successfully help college students to enhance their learning. They determine whether social media has potential impact either positively or negatively on academic learning based on students' perceptions. Their study seek to understand how students informally use social media and what implications such uses predict for the potential integration of social media as a formalized learning tool within college classroom settings whereas our study focusses on the involvement of future teachers in *da'wah* through social media. Contrarily, Ye, Toshimori & Horita, (2017) highlight guidance methods that involve the relationship between social media and social skills. The study by Coleman, Petitt, and Buning (2018) on the other hand, explore whether lecturers, researchers, administrators and clinicians at a university perceived any change in student attitude or performance, in addition to advantages and disadvantages of social media use. Results show that, lecturers and administrators are more active incorporating social media into their practices compared to researchers and clinicians, who are slow to adopt social media for use in the workplace. They also find that students' satisfaction and attitudes hve slightly improved. Another study on attitude is the study by Abraham, Ahmed, Suhara, Fatin Amirah, and Sato (2019) who examine the attitude, perception and behaviour of Japanese students towards social-networking sites, and how students from non-English speaking backgrounds perceive the use of Facebook for learning English as a foreign language. Findings indicate that learners' skills are developed through the use of social media in the context of learning English. On the contrary, our study is different from the studies discussed earlier because it explores on future teachers' involvement in *da'wah* through social media.

Many reseachers have also explored on the use of social media for *da'wah* but their respondents are not future teachers and the issues they highlighted are different from ours. For instance, Faradilah Iqmar (2014) looks at the relationship between social media and *da'wah* among students of a college university in Malaysia. Her research reveals that there is a significant relationship between social media and *da'wah*, a positive impact on the use of *da'wah* through social media and positive benefits of disseminating Islam. Moreover, Yunus, Nordin, Salehi, Embi and Salehi (2013) maintain that students gain more vocabulary and improve their writing skills as a result of their participation on social media networks and thus, they also enhance their reading skills. The skill in reading is vital for online *da'wah* which needs interactive missionary work methods compatible to the progress of social media. Nur Hanis and Siti Nur Syafikah (2017) also identify the function of social media as a medium of Islamic *Da'wah*. They discuss on the importance of using social media and the advantages of social media as an Islamic medium. According to Arifuddin (2016), some recent global issues including Islamophobia, extremist activities, and gender equity are seen as challenges to contemporary Islam and he recommends that Muslims consider the Internet as a media for *da'wah*. Even though these issues may challenge the use of the Internet for *da'wah* practice, but such issues are actually opportunities for future teachers to remedy the situation through valid views described in many forms of *da'wah* through the Internet and to educate others for better understanding of Islam.

Likewise, a study by Muhammad Anshar (2015) focuses on the utilization of the Internet as a medium of *da'wah*, factors that support and hinder *da'wah* through social media and online *da'wah* models employed by lecturers and staff within the environment of a university in Indonesia. Results show high rate of social media adoption and use, whereby a number of key Muslim figures have adopted and utilized the social media successfully for *da'wah* activities. This network enables individuals, groups and organisations to share and exchange information on various activities and interests including information on Islam for *da'wah* and to create profiles. Comparably, Nurdin (2013) studies on the adoption of online social media for *da'wah* purposes and finds that although Muslim societies have yet to get benefits from the online social media technology, some Muslim scholars have adopted the social media to deliver *da'wah* activities effectively. He proposes that the social media should be adopted by Muslims to improve

the scalability of their *da'wah* to encompass societies and *da'wah* strategies be redesigned in response to new advances of technology. Nevertheless, all the studies discussed above did not explore on the involvement of future teachers in *da'wah* through social media.

Therefore, this study fulfils the gap that exist and leads to the necessity to determine the extent to which social media is benefitted for *da'wah* because when it is used in a positive way, social media can be an effective tool for the improvement of future teachers' involvement in *da'wah*.

Methodology

This study is undertaken to address the research issue and answer the research question. The research method is established from the review of previous literature. Since survey research is widely used to determine specific characteristics of groups (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003), in this study the quantitative survey method is used to collect data by administering questionnaire through survey (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The questionnaire is designed and distributed to 401 respondents. The purposive sampling method is employed (Cavana *et al.*, 2001; Creswell, 2008), as this research selected respondents among the future teachers. This type of sampling method has less reliability but is preferred when the time is short, and where the information is needed quickly (Cavana *et al.*, 2001; Sekaran, 2000). The questionnaire consists of 12 items on the use of social media for *da'wah*. The level of agreement as in Table 1 is used during analysis to determine the involvement of future teachers on social media for *da'wah*. Future teachers tick strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed to the 12 items used in the questionnaire instrument.

Table 1
Level of Agreement in the Use of Social Media

No.	Range of Mean	Agreement Level
1.	0.00 – 1.88	Strongly Disagreed
2.	1.89 – 2.60	Disagreed
3.	2.61 – 3.40	Moderately Agreed
4.	3.41 – 4.20	Agreed
5.	4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agreed

The questionnaire items and responses are then used to formulate questions for interviews. A total of ten future teachers were interviewed to validate the findings from quantitative method. The interactive model of Miles & Huberman (1992) is employed to analyse data, which involves data reduction, data presentation, making verification and drawing conclusions.

Findings and Discussions

Demographic findings are displayed in the form of Table 2 to Table 4. The number of participants according to their semester of study is shown in Table 2. The number of semester 2 participants is 39(9.73%), semester 3 is 168(41.9%), and semester 7 is 194(48.37%). This is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Number of Participants and Semester of Study

Semester	Frequency	Percent
2	39	9.73
3	168	41.90

7	194	48.37
Total	401	100.00

The number of participants according to their field of study is shown in Table 3. The number of participants for Islamic Education is 297 (74.06%), Arabic Language is 97 (24.19%), and Malay Language is seven (1.75%).

Table 3
Field of Study

Field of Study	Frequency	Percent
Islamic Education	297	74.06
Arabic Language	97	24.19
Malay Language	7	1.75
Total	401	100.00

In order to answer the research question, respondents are asked to tick strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed in response to statements posed. These statements and the calculated mean are listed in Table 4 below.

Table 4
Involvement in the Use of Social Media for Da'wah

No.	Response :- I use social media to :	Mean	Agreement Level
1.	form a wider network of friends	4.95	Strongly Agreed
2.	increase my own knowledge on Islam	4.51	Strongly Agreed
3.	select friends to joint effort in preaching	4.13	Agreed
4.	receive Islamic messages from friends	4.45	Strongly Agreed
5.	discuss on the authenticity of Islamic messages	4.31	Agreed
6.	disseminate Islam in an interesting manner	4.19	Agreed
7.	build a more lasting relationship with friends	4.13	Agreed
8.	share knowledge on Islam with new and old friends	4.95	Strongly Agreed
9.	discuss with knowledgeable friends on religious issues	4.45	Strongly Agreed
10.	encourage polite interaction among group members	4.51	Strongly Agreed
11.	share Islamic messages as a means of disseminating Islam	4.15	Agreed
12.	look for friends to work together in <i>da'wah</i> activities	4.31	Strongly Agreed

Based on the analysis, the majority of future teachers strongly agreed that social media enables them to be involved in *da'wah* to form a wider network of friends, increase their own knowledge on Islam, receive Islamic messages from friends, share knowledge on Islam with new and old friends, discuss with knowledgeable friends on religious issues, encourage polite interaction among group members of a social media and look for friends to work together in *da'wah* activities. These findings show that future teachers involvement in *da'wah* encourage them to visit social media sites. This is in line with the recommendation by Arifuddin (2016) that Muslims should consider using social media as a form of *da'wah*.

By referring to Table 4 also, future teachers agreed that they use social media for *da'wah* in order to select friends to joint effort in preaching, discuss on the authenticity of Islamic messages, disseminate Islam in an interesting manner, build a more lasting relationship with friends and share Islamic messages as a means of disseminating Islam. This finding is in accordance to the study by Muhammad Anshar (2015) whose results show high rate of social media adoption and usage among participants.

To support the findings from quantitative data, 10 participants, namely Participant 1 (P1) to Participant 10 (P10) were chosen among future teachers. They were interviewed to determine their involvement on the use of social media for *da'wah*. The following are their responses:

P1: The message of *da'wah* through social media affect my soul. It increases my knowledge. Through social media it can give meaningful reminders to a large audience as most individuals spend more time on social sites and this facilitates *da'wah* to be delivered. *Da'wah* messages that I received can be a reminder for me and soothes my heart. *Da'wah* messages are interesting but some are too long. I think the administrator of every group has to remind group members to break up long messages into a few parts before sending them to others.

P2: I use social media widely for *da'wah* because it's easy to interact with friends without limitations. I also see the latest updates and information on current issues pertaining to Islam. I share verses from al-Quran and Hadiths, opinions and experiences on whatsapp, facebook, twitter and so on.

P3: *Da'wah* through social media adds my knowledge. *Da'wah* should be continued in any way. *Da'wah* through social media requires strong argument and proof. So, it is very useful and impactful to the campus community especially using *da'wah* messages to advise one another.

P4: I am spreading a lot of *da'wah* messages and advises my friends if their actions or behaviour is against the proper way. I receive advices too. I use whatsapp applications, facebook, telegrams and twitter without borders at any time especially when connecting with friends.

P5: Through social media I can get a lot of friends so that my *da'wah* is well-communicated, effective and can be shared with others, especially with different religious communities. I can use whatsapp to receive and send Islamic messages. Unfortunately, there are those who do not take care of manners while they are using social media and they use abusive language to hurt others. This is bad for *da'wah*. Everyone in a social media group has to be responsible in reminding one another to observe their language.

P6: Very good to disseminate Islam using whatsapp, telegram, facebook, because it can be used anywhere and easy to use. The Internet is mostly available everywhere. I frequently use it non-stop for almost 24 hours a day, hehe... it is fun to use. I can share messages pertaining to Islam with new and old friends.

P7: I like to receive and send Islamic messages but some messages are too long. I avoid sending the long ones. I am afraid my friends do not want to read long messages.

P8: It's good to carry out *da'wah* using social media. Islamic messages impact especially on myself, but I need to be good at picking the right information on Islam. We can also discuss on the authenticity of the messages received before sharing them with others.

P9: *Da'wah* messages and opinions too are easily shared among friends through social media and can have a more lasting relationship with friends. I have many knowledgeable friends that I can ask for opinions on religious issues.

P10: Besides being able to disseminate Islam among nearby friends, I use social media to connect with friends from other institutes, and it really facilitates friendship with those who are far from us. It enables me to convey *da'wah* messages to as many friends as possible.

Recommendations

Social media should be used responsibly by future teachers without negatively affecting their academic performance. Since social media is rampant in use among today's youth, future teachers should be able

to empower themselves through social media which has many advantages because online *da'wah* is a method of conveying messages in an interactive mode and as long as the user is connected to the Internet, *da'wah* messages can be accessed by anyone at anytime and anywhere.

Although the findings of this study pose challenge for lecturers to figure out ways to use social media to enhance learning outcomes and assist future teachers in *da'wah*, but the findings encourage the use of social media as the revitalization of social relationships among lecturers and future teachers where communicating effectively among themselves can be achieved by their interaction in social media. Interactive social networks should be systematically developed for teaching, learning and *da'wah*. A variety of social media platforms need to be used by lecturers to maintain relationships with one another and with future teachers where they would find it to be more interesting. Social media can be a place for them to meet virtually and as a means to discuss on the best way to preach, where *da'wah* can be done in various strategies that are appropriate.

Based on the findings of this study, the need for future teachers to be engaged in social media is not difficult to achieve because they are already active social media users. Nevertheless, future teachers need to be guided to have a renewed vision of what good teaching is, to seek and retrieve information from various sources and to be able to use information for the creative dissemination of Islam. Informal learning using social media could be facilitated by lecturers and integrated into formal learning environments for enriched discussions on how to increase engagement and to broaden connections through the use of social media for *da'wah*.

Lecturers can guide future teachers in using a creative *da'wah* methodology using social media to make it more applicable, practical and beneficial. One of the creative methods of *da'wah* which is mentioned in the noble Qur'an, is in Surah An-Nahl, 16:125, where Allah (SWT) said that we should call to the way of our Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and reason with others in the best manner possible. When future teachers use social media to video call for example, they need to speak with an appropriate language and acceptable manner, low tone, proper facial appearance and right attitude. Approaching the audience with soft and good manner is one of the best methodologies of *da'wah*. By doing so, they can clearly express the Islamic messages and values to the others with full confidence. Using illustration is another creative method of spreading the Islamic messages through social media.

It is worth considering social media as an effective instrument for future teachers to engage and to interact in order to reach the global Muslim community for the sake of *da'wah* purposes. Lecturers can assist future teachers to make use of the online media as an effective means to reach out not only friends but also global audience. In this manner, confronting obstructions due to the limits of distance, time and space can be overcome. They could adopt a more integrated professional identity, through the reconceptualization of the relationship between teaching, learning, research and *da'wah*. Besides, it is necessary for them to become active members of Muslim communities. They can initiate interactions and develop a coherent response to global issues. The use of social media for *da'wah* would not only increase Muslim audience, but also could potentially attract non-Muslims. When future teachers go to schools for practicum or when they become teachers later, they will also have the opportunity to share interesting *da'wah* messages to colleagues and their pupils. Therefore social media has become a new potential communication application to be adopted and utilized by future teachers for *da'wah* purposes. Further research is essential to explore the interests and acceptance of audience in the use of social media for *da'wah* as well as the social impacts of such approach.

Conclusion

The majority of future teachers in this study strongly agreed that social media enables them to be involved in *da'wah* to form a wider network of friends, increase their own knowledge on Islam, receive

Islamic messages from friends, share knowledge on Islam with new and old friends, discuss with knowledgeable friends on religious issues, encourage polite interaction among group members and look for friends to work together in *da'wah* activities. Future teachers agreed that they use social media for *da'wah* in order to select friends to joint effort in preaching, discuss on the authenticity of Islamic messages, disseminate Islam in an interesting manner, build a more lasting relationship with friends and share Islamic messages as a means of disseminating Islam. This implies that future teachers are making use of social media as a medium to practice *da'wah*. While the nation is accelerating to become a value-based information society, future teachers are on the right track by engaging in social media. It serves as a way of allowing them to enjoy and diversify the unlimited information sources apart from being able to share knowledge on Islam as a form of *da'wah*. With appropriate guidance from their lecturers, the effective use of social media will lead to the improvement of future teachers' ability in *da'wah*. Thus, it can be summed up that social media provides technologies meant to facilitate future teachers in obtaining information, establishing positive interactions and social connections with the aim to carry out *da'wah* effectively.

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