

CRISIS COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT THROUGH DIGITAL DA'WAH: STRATEGIES OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS IN COUNTERING ONLINE DISINFORMATION

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Abstrac: The proliferation of digital disinformation has emerged as a serious contemporary challenge for Islamic religious institutions, whose credibility depends on the accuracy and integrity of the messages they disseminate. Amid the accelerating pace of information circulation on social media platforms, many da'wah institutions have confronted reputational crises triggered by manipulated content, fabricated statements, and decontextualized religious narratives that spread faster than verified clarification. This urgency underscores the need for a systematic understanding of how Islamic religious institutions manage communication crises through digital da'wah practices. This study aims to analyze the strategies employed by Islamic religious institutions in countering online disinformation through the lens of crisis communication management, and to examine how classical Islamic communication principles, particularly tabayyun and amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, are integrated into contemporary digital response mechanisms. The study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive-analytical design grounded in library research and document analysis, drawing on peer-reviewed literature, institutional digital communication artifacts, and secondary reports on religious disinformation incidents published between 2019 and 2026. Data were analyzed thematically through an adapted Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) framework combined with Islamic ethical communication indicators. The findings reveal that effective crisis response typically integrates verification-based clarification, proactive content curation, structured platform governance, and community-embedded dissemination, while remaining sensitive to both institutional and personal dimensions of theological credibility. This study concludes that a hybrid model integrating SCCT with Islamic communicative ethics offers a more contextually relevant and theoretically robust framework for religious institutions navigating digital-era disinformation crises than secular crisis communication models applied in isolation.

Keywords: Crisis Communication, Islamic Religious Institutions, Situational Crisis Communication

Abstrak: Maraknya disinformasi digital telah menjadi tantangan serius bagi lembaga keagamaan Islam, yang kredibilitasnya sangat bergantung pada akurasi dan integritas pesan yang disebarkannya. Di tengah percepatan arus informasi di platform media sosial, banyak lembaga dakwah menghadapi krisis reputasi akibat konten yang dimanipulasi, pernyataan palsu, serta narasi keagamaan yang dilepaskan dari konteksnya dan menyebar lebih cepat dibandingkan klarifikasi resmi. Urgensi ini menegaskan perlunya pemahaman sistematis mengenai cara lembaga keagamaan Islam mengelola krisis komunikasi melalui praktik dakwah digital. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis strategi yang digunakan lembaga keagamaan Islam dalam menangkal disinformasi daring

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melalui perspektif manajemen komunikasi krisis, serta mengkaji bagaimana prinsip komunikasi Islam klasik, khususnya tabayyun dan amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, diintegrasikan kedalam mekanisme respons digital kontemporer. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain deskriptif-analitis berbasis studi pustaka dan analisis dokumen, memanfaatkan literatur akademik terindeks, artefak komunikasi digital kelembagaan, serta laporan sekunder mengenai insiden informasi keagamaan yang dipublikasikan antara tahun 2019 hingga 2026. Data dianalisis secara tematik menggunakan kerangka Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) yang diadaptasi dan dipadukan dengan indikator etika komunikasi Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa respons krisis yang efektif umumnya memadukan klarifikasi berbasis verifikasi, kurasi konten yang proaktif, tata kelola platform yang terstruktur, serta diseminasi berbasis komunitas, dengan tetap memperhatikan dimensi kelembagaan maupun personal dari kredibilitas teologis. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa model hibrida yang memadukan SCCT dengan etika komunikasi Islam menawarkan kerangka yang lebih kontekstual dan kokoh secara teoretis bagi lembaga keagamaan dalam menghadapi krisis disinformasi di era digital, dibandingkan model komunikasi krisis sekuler yang diterapkan secara terpisah.

Kata Kunci: Komunikasi Krisis, Lembaga Keagamaan Islam, Komunikasi Krisis Situasional

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital media has fundamentally reshaped the way religious messages circulate in contemporary society. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and WhatsApp have become primary spaces where religious discourse is produced, contested, and consumed, particularly within Muslim-majority societies such as Indonesia¹. This transformation has given rise to what scholar's term digital da'wah, a mode of Islamic preaching that leverages digital infrastructure to reach wider and more diverse audiences than conventional face-to-face preaching allows². While this shift has expanded the reach and accessibility of Islamic teachings, it has simultaneously exposed religious institutions to a set of unprecedented communicative risks, most notably the rapid and often uncontrollable spread of disinformation, manipulated religious content, and decontextualized narratives that can severely damage institutional credibility within a matter of hours.

Disinformation in the religious sphere is particularly consequential because it does not merely distort factual accuracy but also threatens the theological legitimacy

¹ M. Riza, "Digitalisasi Dakwah Sebagai Upaya Membangun Peradaban Baru Islam Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19," *Fastabiq: Jurnal Studi Islam* 2, no. 1 (2021): 45–61.

² R. Rustandi, "Implementasi Dakwah Digital Melalui Pelatihan Konten Kreatif Desa Damai," *Tadbir: Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* 5, no. 1 (2023): 1–28.

and social trust upon which religious institutions depend³. Fabricated statements attributed to religious figures, doctored images of religious ceremonies, and misquoted verses circulated out of context are common forms of disinformation that Islamic religious institutions in Indonesia have had to confront in recent years⁴. Unlike commercial organizations, whose crises are typically evaluated in terms of financial loss or market reputation, religious institutions face crises that carry moral and spiritual weight, since the credibility of their message is inseparable from the credibility of the institution itself⁵. This distinctive characteristic makes the study of crisis communication in religious contexts both theoretically significant and practically urgent, as generic corporate crisis communication frameworks may not fully capture the ethical and theological dimensions that shape how religious institutions ought to respond.

At the same time, the broader information ecosystem has become increasingly vulnerable to coordinated disinformation campaigns, algorithmic amplification of sensational content, and the erosion of shared epistemic standards for verifying truth⁶. Studies on digital extremism and ideological classification have shown that religious and ideological content is particularly susceptible to being weaponized, manipulated, or taken out of context to serve divisive agendas⁷. Within this environment, Islamic religious institutions, including pesantren, madrasah, and da'wah organizations, are not passive recipients of disinformation but active communicators who must decide how, when, and through which channels to respond. The strategic choices they make in these moments of crisis, whether to issue rapid clarification, engage in theological correction, mobilize community-based verification, or remain silent, carry significant consequences for public trust and social cohesion.

³ Akmalun Najmi et al., "Peningkatan Kecerdasan Spritual Melalui Konsep 'Ikhlas Dan Ridha' Atas Pengabdian Kepada Keluarga Guru (Kyai) Pondok Pesantren," *Jurnal Lentera: Kajian Keagamaan, Keilmuan Dan Teknologi* 24, no. 1 (2025): 264–76.

⁴ Gondo Adhi Saputra et al., "Epistemologi Pendidikan Agama Islam: Integrasi Sumber Transenden Dan Rasional Dalam Pembentukan Kesadaran Religius Peserta Didik," *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 10, no. 04 (2025): 186–96.

⁵ C. Hefner, "Morality, Religious Authority, and the Digital Edge," *American Ethnologist* 49, no. 3 (2022): 359–73.

⁶ C. R. Sunstein, *Echo Chambers and Social Media* (Princeton University Press, 2021).

⁷ A. Gaikwad, M., Ahirrao, S., Kotecha, K., & Abraham, *Multi-Ideology Multi-Class Extremism Classification Using Deep Learning Techniques* (IEEE Access, 2022).

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Several prior studies have examined related dimensions of this phenomenon. First, investigated the digitalization of da'wah during the Covid-19 pandemic, demonstrating that Islamic religious institutions successfully adapted preaching methods to online platforms as a means of sustaining religious community life under conditions of physical distancing⁸. This study, however, focused primarily on the adoption of digital tools for continuity of religious practice rather than on how institutions manage communicative crises arising from misinformation. Second, examined the transformation of da'wah communication in the digital era, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges faced by contemporary Islamic education in adapting to digital communication norms⁹. While this study offers valuable insight into broader transformation patterns, it does not specifically address crisis response mechanisms or the strategic management of disinformation-triggered reputational threats. Third, explored the challenges of disinformation faced by Islamic da'wah in the digital era, identifying the erosion of religious authority and audience confusion as key consequences of unmanaged misinformation¹⁰. Although this study directly engages with disinformation as a phenomenon, it stops short of proposing an integrated crisis communication model that combines Islamic ethical principles with established crisis communication theory.

Taken together, these studies reveal a consistent pattern: existing literature has extensively documented the transformation of da'wah into digital forms and has acknowledged disinformation as a growing threat, yet it has not systematically analyzed how Islamic religious institutions strategically manage communication crises triggered by digital disinformation through an integrated theoretical lens¹¹. Most available studies either adopt a descriptive approach to digital da'wah practices or address disinformation as a general societal problem, without connecting these two threads through an established crisis communication framework such as Situational

⁸ Riza, "Digitalisasi Dakwah Sebagai Upaya Membangun Peradaban Baru Islam Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19."

⁹ S. Rani, "Transformasi Komunikasi Dakwah Dalam Era Digital: Peluang Dan Tantangan Dalam Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer," *Al-Mikraj: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora* 4, no. 1 (2023): 207–16.

¹⁰ N. Syam, "Dakwah Islam Dan Tantangan Disinformasi Di Era Digital," *Jurnal Komunikasi Islam* 12, no. 2 (2022): 145–60.

¹¹ W. T. Coombs, *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding (5th Ed.)* (SAGE Publications, 2019).

Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)¹². This gap is significant because religious institutions require a communication model that accounts not only for reputational protection, as emphasized in secular crisis communication theory, but also for the preservation of theological legitimacy and moral authority, dimensions that are unique to religious organizational crises. Furthermore, few studies have examined how classical Islamic communicative principles, such as *tabayyun* (careful verification before disseminating information) and *amarma'rufnahlaimunkar* (commanding good and forbidding wrong), function as indigenous crisis communication resources that can be systematically integrated with contemporary crisis communication theory.

Several interrelated problems emerge from this situation and warrant systematic investigation. The first problem concerns the absence of a clear, theologically informed protocol that Islamic religious institutions can follow when confronted with viral disinformation, which often results in delayed, inconsistent, or reactive responses that allow false narratives to dominate public perception before official clarification is issued. The second problem relates to the tension between the imperative of theological accuracy, which demands careful verification and measured language, and the demand of digital media ecosystems for immediacy, which rewards fast and emotionally resonant responses; institutions that prioritize theological caution may inadvertently cede the narrative space to disinformation actors who operate without such constraints. The third problem concerns the limited digital communication capacity of many *da'wah* organizations, particularly smaller *pesantren* and local Islamic institutions, which often lack dedicated public relations structures, trained spokespersons, or systematic monitoring mechanisms capable of detecting disinformation at an early stage. These three problems collectively underscore the urgency of developing a crisis communication framework that is both operationally practical and doctrinally coherent for Islamic religious institutions operating in the digital public sphere.

This research gap forms the central rationale for the present study. Rather than treating digital *da'wah* and crisis communication as separate domains, this study

¹² W. T. Coombs, "Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT): Refining and Clarifying a Cognitive-Based Theory of Crisis Communication. In W. T. Coombs & S. J. Holladay (Eds.)," in *The Handbook of Crisis Communication*, 2022, 193–204.

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positions digital da'wah strategies as a form of applied crisis communication management, one that draws simultaneously on Islamic ethical-communicative traditions and modern organizational crisis communication theory. By doing so, this study seeks to contribute a more contextually grounded understanding of how religious institutions can navigate the increasingly complex terrain of digital disinformation without compromising their theological integrity or public credibility.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the digital da'wah strategies employed by Islamic religious institutions in managing communication crises triggered by online disinformation, and to develop an integrated conceptual framework that combines Situational Crisis Communication Theory with Islamic ethical communication principles. Specifically, this study seeks to identify the patterns of crisis response adopted by Islamic religious institutions when confronted with viral disinformation, to examine how theological and ethical considerations shape the selection of communication strategies, and to formulate a hybrid model that can serve as a practical and theoretical reference for religious institutions, communication practitioners, and policymakers concerned with religious digital literacy.

The findings of this study are expected to offer both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on religious crisis communication by extending Western-originated crisis communication theory into an Islamic institutional context, thereby enriching cross-cultural understanding of how organizational crisis response is shaped by religious and cultural values. Practically, the findings are expected to provide actionable guidance for da'wah organizations, Islamic educational institutions, and religious communication practitioners in designing more effective, ethically grounded, and theologically consistent strategies for countering disinformation. In a broader sense, this study also contributes to national efforts in strengthening digital literacy and religious moderation by demonstrating how religious institutions can serve as credible anchors of accurate information amid the turbulence of the digital information environment.

This study employs a qualitative research design using a descriptive-analytical approach grounded in library research (*studi pustaka*), combined with case-oriented document analysis. This design was selected because the phenomenon under

investigation, namely institutional crisis communication strategies in response to digital disinformation, is best understood through in-depth interpretive analysis of textual, visual, and institutional communication artifacts rather than through statistical measurement¹³. The data sources consist of secondary data, including peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional press releases, official statements published on the social media accounts and websites of Islamic religious institutions, news reports documenting disinformation incidents involving religious organizations, and relevant academic literature on crisis communication theory and Islamic communication ethics published between 2019 and 2026.

Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques, involving the systematic tracing, compilation, and categorization of digital communication artifacts and scholarly sources relevant to the research focus. Sources were purposively selected based on relevance to instances of religious disinformation crises and institutional response patterns in the Indonesian context¹⁴. Data analysis was carried out using thematic content analysis, following an interactive analysis model comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analytical framework combines Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) indicators, namely crisis type, response strategy, and reputational threat level, with Islamic communication ethics indicators, namely *tabayyun*, *amanah*, and *hikmah*. Data credibility was strengthened through source triangulation, cross-referencing multiple independent sources describing the same crisis event to ensure consistency and analytical validity.

Results and Discussion

A. Islamic Religious Institutions as Crisis Communicators within the Digital Disinformation Ecosystem

¹³ Ismail Ismail and Moh Wardi Moh Wardi, "Transforming Elementary School Students' Science Literacy through Scratch-Based E-Modules Integrated with Islamic Value," *International Journal of Elementary Education* 9, no. 2 (2025): 237–47.

¹⁴ Kamal Hamdun et al., "Model Konseptual Pembelajaran Adaptif Berbasis Kecerdasan Buatan Sebagai Inovasi Kontekstualisasi Kurikulum Pendidikan Menuju Indonesia Emas 2045," *Raudhab Proud To Be Professionals: Jurnal Tarbiyah Islamiyah* 10, no. 2 (2025).

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The findings of this study indicate that Islamic religious institutions in Indonesia increasingly occupy the position of crisis communicators, a role that departs significantly from their traditional function as sources of religious guidance and moral authority¹⁵. In the pre-digital era, religious institutions primarily communicated through sermons, printed publications, and face-to-face interaction, contexts in which the pace of information circulation was slow enough to allow careful theological deliberation before a message reached its audience¹⁶. The digital environment has collapsed this temporal buffer. Disinformation involving religious institutions, whether in the form of fabricated fatwas, manipulated video clips of religious leaders, or decontextualized quotations attributed to prominent ulama, now spreads within minutes through platforms such as WhatsApp groups, Facebook pages, and short-video applications¹⁷. This acceleration transforms religious institutions from passive subjects of public discourse into active participants who must manage their communicative exposure in real time, a condition that closely resembles the corporate crisis environment described by Coombs in Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), yet with additional layers of theological and moral complexity¹⁸.

SCCT posits that organizations facing a crisis must first assess the type of crisis and the level of reputational threat it poses before selecting an appropriate response strategy, ranging from denial, diminishment, and rebuilding, to bolstering strategies¹⁹. When applied to the religious institutional context, this study finds that disinformation crises faced by da'wah organizations can be categorized into three recurring types. The first is doctrinal misattribution, in which false religious opinions or fatwas are attributed to an institution or its

¹⁵ Moh Wardi et al., "Digital Transformation of Islamic Boarding School Financial System; Formulation, Implementation and Evaluation," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 4 (2024): 461–82.

¹⁶ Akmalun Najmi and Abd Fattah, "Implementasi Pemanfaatan Teknologi dalam Pendidikan formal di Pesantren (Study Kasus di SMP Mathlaul Ulum Tambuko Sumenep)," *As-Sulthan Journal of Education* 1, no. 4 (2025): 816–22.

¹⁷ Coombs, *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding* (5th Ed.).

¹⁸ Coombs, "Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT): Refining and Clarifying a Cognitive-Based Theory of Crisis Communication. In W. T. Coombs & S. J. Holladay (Eds.),"

¹⁹ Coombs.

leaders without authorization, often to advance a particular ideological or political agenda. The second is reputational defamation, in which fabricated narratives about the moral conduct of religious figures or the financial integrity of an institution are circulated to undermine public trust. The third is contextual distortion, in which authentic statements or events are selectively edited or stripped of context to create a misleading impression. Each of these crisis types demands a distinct communicative response, yet all three share a common underlying threat: the erosion of what may be termed theological credibility, a form of institutional legitimacy that is more fragile and more consequential than ordinary commercial reputation because it is intertwined with followers' spiritual trust.

This study also finds that the response capacity of Islamic religious institutions varies considerably depending on institutional scale and digital infrastructure. Larger, nationally recognized da'wah organizations tend to possess dedicated media and communication divisions capable of issuing rapid, coordinated clarifications, often accompanied by visual content designed to counter the emotional appeal of the original disinformation. In contrast, smaller and locally rooted institutions, including many pesantren, frequently lack the technical infrastructure, trained personnel, and monitoring systems necessary to detect disinformation early, resulting in delayed responses that allow false narratives to circulate unchallenged for extended periods. This disparity echoes concerns raised by Hefner, who observes that digital platforms have simultaneously democratized religious authority and intensified competition over whose voice is perceived as authoritative, placing institutions with weaker digital capacity at a structural disadvantage in moments of crisis²⁰.

A further finding concerns the role of algorithmic amplification in shaping the severity of religious disinformation crises. Consistent with Gaikwad et al, whose research on ideological content classification demonstrates that emotionally charged and ideologically polarized content tends to receive disproportionate algorithmic visibility, this study observes that disinformation targeting religious

²⁰ Hefner, "Morality, Religious Authority, and the Digital Edge."

institutions frequently exploits emotionally provocative framing, such as accusations of heresy, moral corruption, or political affiliation, precisely because such framing maximizes engagement and, consequently, algorithmic distribution²¹. This dynamic places religious institutions at a structural disadvantage, since accurate clarification, which is typically more measured, nuanced, and theologically cautious in tone, tends to generate comparatively lower engagement and therefore reaches a smaller audience than the original disinformation. Sunstein's analysis of echo chambers further clarifies this pattern by demonstrating that individuals embedded within ideologically homogeneous digital networks are less likely to encounter or accept corrective information from outside their trusted networks, reinforcing the persistence of disinformation even after official clarification has been issued²².

A closer examination of the cases analyzed in this study also reveals that the target of religious disinformation is rarely limited to the institution as an abstract entity; rather, disinformation frequently personalizes its target by attributing fabricated statements or conduct to specific, named religious figures whose personal credibility is closely bound to institutional legitimacy. This personalization strategy appears deliberately designed to maximize emotional engagement, since audiences tend to react more intensely to perceived moral failings of a trusted individual than to abstract institutional criticism. Consequently, crisis response strategies that address only the institutional dimension of a disinformation incident, without also addressing the personal reputational dimension experienced by the implicated religious figure, were found in this study to be comparatively less effective in restoring public trust. This observation extends Coombs' contingency-based view of crisis response by suggesting that religious institutional crises frequently operate along two simultaneous tracks, institutional and personal, both of which must be addressed for a crisis response to be considered comprehensive²³.

²¹ Gaikwad, M., Ahirrao, S., Kotecha, K., & Abraham, *Multi-Ideology Multi-Class Extremism Classification Using Deep Learning Techniques*.

²² Sunstein, *Echo Chambers and Social Media*.

²³ Coombs, "Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT): Refining and Clarifying a Cognitive-Based Theory of Crisis Communication. In W. T. Coombs & S. J. Holladay (Eds.),"

Taken together, these findings position Islamic religious institutions within what may be described as an asymmetric crisis communication environment, one in which the institution's theological obligation toward accuracy and measured discourse places it at a competitive disadvantage against the speed and emotional resonance of disinformation. This asymmetry constitutes the core structural challenge that digital da'wah strategies must address, and it forms the analytical foundation for the discussion of specific strategic responses presented in the following sub-sections.

B. Digital Da'wah Strategies: Tabayyun, Content Curation, and Platform Governance

The second major finding of this study concerns the specific strategic repertoire that Islamic religious institutions employ when countering online disinformation, which this study organizes into three interrelated strategies: verification-based response (tabayyun), proactive content curation, and platform governance.

The principle of tabayyun, derived from the Qur'anic injunction to verify information carefully before acting upon or transmitting it, emerges from this study as the most consistently invoked ethical-communicative resource among Islamic religious institutions confronting disinformation. Rather than issuing immediate but unverified rebuttals, many institutions in the analyzed cases adopted a two-stage response pattern: an initial holding statement acknowledging awareness of the circulating content, followed by a substantive clarification issued after internal verification had been completed. This pattern aligns with what Coombs terms the instructing and adjusting information response²⁴, which prioritizes providing the public with accurate operational and emotional guidance during the early stages of a crisis, while also resonating with the Islamic emphasis on epistemic caution described by Rani in her analysis of digital-era da'wah transformation²⁵. Importantly, this study finds that institutions which explicitly framed their clarification around the principle of tabayyun, rather than presenting

²⁴ Coombs, *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding* (5th Ed.).

²⁵ Rani, "Transformasi Komunikasi Dakwah Dalam Era Digital: Peluang Dan Tantangan Dalam Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer."

it as a purely defensive rebuttal, tended to receive more favorable public reception, since the framing itself functioned as a form of moral positioning that reinforced the institution's commitment to truthfulness rather than mere self-protection.

However, this study also identifies a significant tension embedded within the tabayyun-based approach. Because thorough verification requires time, institutions that rigidly adhere to a slow, deliberate verification process risk losing the narrative initiative to disinformation actors who face no equivalent ethical constraint. Several cases examined in this study show that disinformation narratives had already reached saturation point on social media before institutional clarification was issued, rendering the eventual correction less impactful despite its factual accuracy. Finding

1. Consistent with Syam's observation that the erosion of religious authority in the digital era is driven not only by the existence of disinformation itself but by the comparative slowness of authoritative religious response relative to the speed of viral misinformation²⁶. Addressing this tension, several more digitally mature institutions in this study adopted a hybrid model combining an immediate but carefully worded holding statement, one that neither confirms nor denies the disinformation but signals active verification, with a more comprehensive theological and factual clarification issued within twenty-four to forty-eight hours. This hybrid approach appears to reconcile the ethical demand for accuracy with the practical demand for timeliness.
2. Strategic dimension identified in this study is proactive content curation, referring to the deliberate production and dissemination of authoritative, easily shareable religious content designed to preempt disinformation before it emerges, rather than merely reacting once a crisis has occurred. This strategy reflects a shift from reactive crisis management toward what may be termed anticipatory crisis communication. Institutions engaging in proactive content curation typically produce short, visually engaging explainer content covering commonly misrepresented religious topics, publish verified digital archives of

²⁶ Syam, "Dakwah Islam Dan Tantangan Disinformasi Di Era Digital."

official statements and fatwas to serve as authoritative reference points, and cultivate consistent digital personas for religious leaders to reduce the plausibility of impersonation or misattribution. Rustandi's study on digital da'wah training through creative content production supports this finding, demonstrating that institutions equipped with structured content creation capacity are better positioned to compete for audience attention within algorithmically driven digital environments²⁷. Similarly, Syihabudin and Rahman emphasize that strategic digital da'wah content, when consistently produced and disseminated, functions simultaneously as religious education and as a form of reputational insurance against future disinformation, since audiences already familiar with an institution's authentic voice and messaging style are less susceptible to being misled by fabricated content attributed to that institution²⁸.

3. Strategic dimension concerns platform governance, understood as the internal policies, monitoring systems, and collaborative arrangements that institutions establish to manage their digital communication environment. This study finds considerable variation in platform governance maturity across the institutions examined. More digitally mature institutions had established internal social media monitoring teams tasked with the early detection of disinformation, formal escalation protocols specifying who is authorized to issue official clarification, and collaborative relationships with independent fact-checking organizations and digital literacy initiatives. These governance structures align with the digital literacy-based response model proposed in recent Indonesian da'wah scholarship, which frames digital literacy not merely as an individual competency but as an institutional capacity that must be systematically cultivated²⁹. By contrast, institutions lacking such governance structures were found to rely heavily on ad hoc, personality-driven responses, typically initiated

²⁷ Rustandi, "Implementasi Dakwah Digital Melalui Pelatihan Konten Kreatif Desa Damai."

²⁸ A. N. Syihabudin, B., & Rahman, "Strategi Dakwah Digital: Meningkatkan Misi Dakwah Dan Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar Melalui Media Sosial," *AL-BALAGH: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* 1, no. 1 (2024): 58–68.

²⁹ S. Susilo, M. E., Afifi, S., & Yustitia, "Hoax as a Reflection on the Low Digital Literacy in Indonesia. In Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Social, Economy, Education and Humanity," (*ICoSEEH*), 2020, 165–74.

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by a single religious leader reacting individually on personal social media accounts, a pattern that, while sometimes effective in generating rapid public attention, lacks the institutional consistency and accountability necessary for sustained crisis management credibility.

Across all three strategic dimensions, this study observes that the most resilient institutions were those that succeeded in integrating tabayyun-based verification, proactive content curation, and structured platform governance into a coherent, mutually reinforcing communication system, rather than treating these strategies as isolated tactical responses deployed only during active crises. This integration reflects what Azizah and Fauzan describe as an ethics-of-care approach to social media governance within Islamic communication, wherein the moral obligation to communicate truthfully is embedded structurally within institutional practice rather than left to the discretion of individual actors responding under crisis pressure³⁰.

An additional pattern worth noting concerns the choice of communication channel and format in executing these three strategies. This study finds that institutions achieving the greatest reach in their corrective messaging tended to match content format to platform affordances rather than distributing identical content uniformly across all channels. Short, visually driven clarification videos performed comparatively well on platforms oriented toward short-form video consumption, whereas more detailed theological explanations, often accompanied by citation of primary religious texts, were disseminated through longer-form articles or official statements published on institutional websites and subsequently linked through social media. Jalaluddin et al. similarly observe that generational differences in platform preference necessitate a differentiated content strategy, since younger audiences engaging primarily through short-video platforms respond differently to religious messaging than audiences who continue to rely on text-based or long-form communication³¹. This finding suggests that effective digital da'wah crisis response requires not only accurate content but also format

³⁰ (Azizah, N., & Fauzan, 2024)

³¹ M. R. Jalaluddin, M., Siskawati, I., Kudrotullah, A., Uyun, N., & Eletmany, "Social Media Da'wah as a Means to Deepen the Religious Understanding of Generation Z," *Syiar: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam* 4, no. 2 (2024): 173–84.

literacy, an awareness of how different digital platforms shape audience reception and message credibility.

C. Toward an Integrated Model: Situational Crisis Communication Theory and Islamic Ethical Communication in Countering Online Disinformation

The third and most significant finding of this study is the identification of a viable integrated model that combines Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) with Islamic ethical communication principles, offering a more contextually relevant framework than either paradigm applied in isolation³². As established in the preceding discussion, SCCT provides a systematic structure for classifying crisis type, assessing reputational threat, and selecting response strategy, yet this framework was originally developed within secular corporate contexts and does not explicitly account for the theological and moral dimensions that shape how religious institutions define an appropriate response³³. Conversely, classical Islamic communication principles such as *tabayyun*, *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *hikmah* (wisdom in delivery) provide rich ethical guidance for religious communicators but lack the systematic, situational calibration that SCCT offers for matching response strategy to crisis severity. This study argues that these two frameworks are not competing but complementary, and proposes a hybrid model organized around three integrative principles: theological-reputational threat assessment, ethically calibrated response selection, and community-embedded verification.

1. Integrative principle, theological-reputational threat assessment, extends Coombs' attribution-based threat assessment by incorporating a theological dimension alongside the conventional reputational dimension³⁴. In SCCT, threat level is primarily assessed according to the degree to which stakeholders attribute responsibility for the crisis to the organization. Within the religious institutional context, this study finds that threat level must additionally account for the degree to which the disinformation implicates core theological legitimacy, such as claims involving doctrinal deviation or unauthorized fatwa

³² Coombs, *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding* (5th Ed.).

³³ Coombs, "Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT): Refining and Clarifying a Cognitive-Based Theory of Crisis Communication. In W. T. Coombs & S. J. Holladay (Eds.),"

³⁴ Coombs.

issuance, as opposed to threats that are primarily administrative or reputational in nature, such as allegations concerning institutional management. This distinction matters because disinformation that threatens theological legitimacy tends to provoke stronger emotional reactions among religious followers and consequently spreads with greater velocity and depth than disinformation of a purely administrative nature, a pattern consistent with Hefner's observation that questions of religious authority carry heightened symbolic stakes within digital Muslim publics³⁵. Institutions that accurately diagnosed the theological dimension of a given disinformation crisis were found in this study to allocate response resources more effectively, prioritizing theologically substantive clarification for doctrinally sensitive crises while adopting more procedural, administrative responses for crises of a managerial nature.

2. Integrative principle, ethically calibrated response selection, adapts Coombs' spectrum of crisis response strategies, ranging from denial and diminishment to rebuilding and bolstering, by embedding Islamic ethical constraints into the selection process³⁶. This study finds that Islamic religious institutions rarely, if ever, employ denial strategies in the conventional SCCT sense, even in cases where an institution bears no factual responsibility for the disinformation, because outright denial without accompanying explanation is perceived as inconsistent with the value of amanah and risks appearing evasive rather than trustworthy. Instead, institutions favored what may be termed an explanatory rebuilding strategy, combining factual correction with theological contextualization and, in several cases, an expression of empathy toward followers who had been misled, reflecting the principle of hikmah in the manner of delivery. This finding extends Coombs framework by demonstrating that religious institutional crisis response is shaped not only by strategic calculation of reputational protection but by a parallel ethical calculation concerning the moral character the institution wishes to project through its response, a dimension largely absent from secular crisis communication theory. Lailas study on santri strategies for countering hoaxes

³⁵ Hefner, "Morality, Religious Authority, and the Digital Edge."

³⁶ Coombs, *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding* (5th Ed.).

on social media similarly emphasizes that the manner of correction, not merely its factual content, significantly influences whether corrective messaging is accepted or dismissed by the affected audience³⁷.

3. Integrative principle, community-embedded verification, addresses one of the most distinctive features of Islamic religious institutional crisis communication identified in this study: the mobilization of the broader religious community, including santri, alumni networks, and affiliated da'i, as auxiliary verification and dissemination agents during a crisis. Rather than relying solely on centralized institutional statements, several institutions examined in this study activated distributed networks of trusted community members to amplify official clarification through personal social media accounts, functioning as a form of peer-to-peer counter-disinformation that leverages existing social trust structures within the religious community. This practice resonates with Sunstein's analysis of echo chambers, which suggests that corrective information is more likely to be accepted when it originates from within an individual's trusted social network rather than from an external or purely institutional source³⁸. By embedding verification and correction within existing community trust networks, religious institutions are able to partially offset the structural disadvantage described earlier in this study, wherein algorithmically amplified disinformation tends to outpace centrally issued institutional clarification.

Integrating these three principles, this study proposes that effective digital da'wah crisis communication can be conceptualized as a cyclical process comprising four stages: theological-reputational threat diagnosis, ethically calibrated message formulation, community-embedded dissemination, and post-crisis digital literacy reinforcement³⁹. The final stage, post-crisis digital literacy reinforcement, reflects a finding echoed across several sources examined in this study, namely that institutions treating disinformation crises as isolated incidents

³⁷ A. Laila, "Strategi Dakwah Santri Dalam Menghadapi Berita Hoaks Di Media Sosial" (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2023).

³⁸ Sunstein, *Echo Chambers and Social Media*.

³⁹ Susilo, M. E., Afifi, S., & Yustitia, "Hoax as a Reflection on the Low Digital Literacy in Indonesia. In Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Social, Economy, Education and Humanity."

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to be resolved and forgotten tend to remain vulnerable to recurring disinformation, whereas institutions that systematically convert crisis experiences into ongoing digital literacy education for their communities demonstrate greater long-term resilience⁴⁰. This reinforces the argument that effective crisis communication in the religious institutional context should not be understood merely as reactive damage control but as an integral component of the broader da'wah mission itself, one that simultaneously protects institutional credibility and fulfills the educational and moral responsibilities inherent to Islamic preaching.

This study further finds that the proposed integrated model carries implications for how institutional leadership structures should be organized to support effective crisis response. In cases where crisis response authority was concentrated in a single senior religious figure without a supporting communication team, response times were consistently slower and messaging less consistent across platforms, since the individual leader was required to simultaneously verify facts, formulate theologically appropriate language, and manage multiple communication channels under significant time pressure⁴¹. Conversely, institutions that had distributed these functions across a small coordinated team, typically comprising a religious authority responsible for theological accuracy, a communication officer responsible for message formulation and channel management, and a monitoring function responsible for tracking the disinformation's spread, demonstrated markedly faster and more coherent responses. This organizational finding aligns with Rustandi's argument that effective digital da'wah increasingly requires institutional professionalization of communication functions rather than reliance on the charisma or individual initiative of a single religious leader, even as that leader's theological authority remains central to the legitimacy of any eventual clarification⁴².

The integrated model also carries implications for inter-institutional collaboration. Several of the more resilient cases examined in this study involved coordinated responses among multiple religious institutions or affiliated

⁴⁰ Rustandi, "Implementasi Dakwah Digital Melalui Pelatihan Konten Kreatif Desa Damai."

⁴¹ P. Lévy, *Cyberculture*. University of Minnesota Press., 2023.

⁴² Rustandi, "Implementasi Dakwah Digital Melalui Pelatihan Konten Kreatif Desa Damai."

organizations facing similar disinformation narratives, whereby institutions shared verified information, cross-referenced clarifications, and jointly amplified corrective content through their respective networks⁴³. This collaborative pattern appears particularly effective in countering disinformation narratives that target Islamic religious authority more broadly rather than a single institution, since a coordinated multi-institutional response signals broader consensus and reduces the likelihood that the disinformation can be dismissed as merely self-interested institutional defense. This observation extends the community-embedded verification principle discussed above from the intra-institutional to the inter-institutional level, suggesting that digital da'wah crisis communication is most effective when conceptualized not as an isolated institutional responsibility but as a shared ecosystem-level responsibility among religious organizations that share overlapping audiences and overlapping vulnerability to disinformation.

Finally, this study identifies an important limitation and boundary condition of the proposed integrated model. The effectiveness of ethically calibrated, community-embedded crisis response depends substantially on the pre-existing level of digital trust and social capital an institution has cultivated prior to the onset of any given crisis. Institutions lacking an established digital presence, a consistent public communication history, or meaningful pre-crisis engagement with their audience through digital channels were found to derive comparatively limited benefit from the strategies described above, since audiences had little prior basis for trusting the institution's digital voice even when that voice was ethically framed and factually accurate. This finding suggests that the integrated model proposed in this study should not be understood as a set of discrete crisis-response tactics to be activated only when disinformation strikes, but rather as a long-term communicative disposition that religious institutions must cultivate continuously, well before any specific crisis emerges, echoing this study's earlier

⁴³ Akmalun Najmi et al., "Intrinsic Motivation in Islamic Education: A Comparative Study of Abraham Maslow's Theory and the Concept of Ghirah in Islamic Psychology," *ILJ: Islamic Learning Journal* 4, no. 2 (2026): 273–308.

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emphasis on post-crisis digital literacy reinforcement as an ongoing rather than episodic institutional commitment⁴⁴.

Overall, the proposed integrated model suggests that the most theoretically robust and practically effective approach to countering online disinformation within Islamic religious institutions is neither a purely secular crisis management framework nor an exclusively theological response, but a synthesis that treats Islamic ethical communication principles as substantive inputs shaping every stage of the crisis communication process, from threat assessment through to long-term community resilience building. This synthesis addresses the research gap identified in the introduction of this study, offering a theoretically grounded and practically applicable framework that extends existing crisis communication theory into a religious institutional context previously underexplored in the literature.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Islamic religious institutions face a distinctive crisis communication challenge in the digital era, one shaped simultaneously by the accelerated dynamics of online disinformation and by theological obligations toward truthfulness and measured discourse. The findings demonstrate that effective digital da'wah strategies rest on three interrelated pillars: verification-based response through tabayyun, proactive content curation, and structured platform governance, each of which functions most effectively when embedded within community trust networks rather than operating as isolated institutional actions.

Building on these findings, this study proposes an integrated model combining Situational Crisis Communication Theory with Islamic ethical communication principles, offering a theoretically robust and practically applicable framework for religious institutions. Future research is recommended to empirically test this model through primary fieldwork across institutions of varying digital maturity, thereby strengthening its generalizability beyond the document-based analysis undertaken in this study.

⁴⁴ M. Ulyan, "Digital Da'wah and Religious Authority: A Narrative Review of Islamic Preaching in the Social Media Era," *Sinergi International Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 3 (2023): 100–113.

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