

Representation of Da'wah Messages and University Students Responses to the @pesantrennuruljadid Instagram Account from the Perspective of Religious Literacy

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Received: 17-07-2026

Revised: 26-07-2026

Accepted: 31-07-2026

Abstract

The evolution of social media has shifted the delivery of dakwah (Islamic outreach) from conventional methods to a more interactive digital format. Instagram has emerged as a key platform utilized by Islamic educational institutions including the @pesantrennuruljadid account to disseminate dakwah messages through visually engaging, educational, and communicative content. This study aims to analyze how dakwah messages are represented on the @pesantrennuruljadid Instagram account and to examine the responses of Nurul Jadid University students (mahasantri) to these messages through the lens of religious literacy. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the study gathered data via observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of Instagram content, which were subsequently analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The findings reveal that the dakwah messages on the @pesantrennuruljadid account incorporate values related to aqidah, sharia, and akhlaq, alongside the reinforcement of Islamic character; these are conveyed through visual designs, short videos (Reels), dakwah posters, documentation of pesantren activities, and accessible narratives. Student responses were generally positive, as the content broadened their religious insights, deepened their understanding of Islamic values, and boosted their motivation to practice their faith. However, the effectiveness of these messages is also influenced by factors such as digital literacy levels, the ability to grasp the context of the message, and the students' consistency in verifying religious information found on social media. In conclusion, the @pesantrennuruljadid account plays a significant role in representing dakwah messages and fostering religious literacy among students. Consequently, the management of dakwah content ensuring it remains credible, educational, and aligned with the needs of the digital generation must be continuously enhanced.

Keywords: Representation of Dakwah Messages; Instagram; Religious Literacy; Mahasantri; Social Media

Abstrak

Perkembangan media sosial telah mengubah pola penyampaian dakwah dari metode konvensional menjadi dakwah digital yang lebih interaktif. Instagram menjadi salah satu platform yang dimanfaatkan oleh lembaga pendidikan Islam, termasuk akun @pesantrennuruljadid, sebagai media penyebaran pesan dakwah yang dikemas secara visual, edukatif, dan komunikatif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis representasi pesan dakwah yang disampaikan melalui akun Instagram @pesantrennuruljadid serta mengkaji respon mahasantri Universitas Nurul Jadid terhadap pesan dakwah tersebut dalam perspektif literasi keagamaan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis deskriptif. Data diperoleh melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, serta dokumentasi konten Instagram, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa representasi pesan dakwah pada akun @pesantrennuruljadid memuat nilai-nilai akidah (creed), syariah (worship), akhlak (morality), serta penguatan karakter keislaman yang disampaikan melalui desain visual, video pendek (reels), poster dakwah, dokumentasi kegiatan pesantren, dan narasi yang mudah dipahami. Mahasantri memberikan respon cenderung positif karena konten tersebut mampu menambah wawasan keagamaan, memperkuat pemahaman nilai-nilai Islam, dan meningkatkan motivasi beramal. Meskipun demikian, efektivitas penyampaian pesan dakwah juga dipengaruhi oleh tingkat literasi digital, kemampuan memahami konteks pesan, serta konsistensi mahasantri dalam memverifikasi informasi keagamaan di media sosial. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa akun @pesantrennuruljadid memiliki peran signifikan dalam merepresentasikan pesan dakwah dan mendukung peningkatan literasi keagamaan mahasantri. Oleh karena itu, pengelolaan konten dakwah yang kredibel, edukatif, dan sesuai dengan kebutuhan generasi digital perlu terus ditingkatkan.

Keywords: Representasi Pesan Dakwah; Instagram; Literasi Keagamaan; Mahasantri; Media Sosial.

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has transformed the way society obtains, processes, and disseminates information, including religious information. Data from We Are Social and Hootsuite (2025) shows that the number of social media users in Indonesia has reached 167 million

people or approximately 60% of the total population, with Instagram being one of the most widely used platforms, especially among young people aged 18-34 years. Digital transformation, marked by increased internet and social media usage, has made da'wah spaces no longer limited to mosques, study circles, or educational institutions, but has also expanded to various digital platforms that can be accessed anytime and anywhere. Social media has become a new public sphere that enables two-way interaction between communicators and audiences quickly, broadly, and without geographical boundaries. In the context of Islamic da'wah, this change presents new opportunities for Islamic educational institutions, religious organizations, and da'is to deliver Islamic messages more effectively through digital media. One platform that is widely utilized is Instagram because it has attractive visual characteristics, is interactive, and aligns with the communication patterns of the younger generation. Various features such as reels, stories, carousels, live Instagram, and comment columns allow da'wah messages to be delivered creatively, thus reaching a wider audience (Pratama, 2024).

As one of the pesantren-based universities, Universitas Nurul Jadid (UNUJA) utilizes social media as an institutional communication tool as well as a digital da'wah medium. Through the Instagram account @pesantrennuruljadid, various information regarding pesantren activities, Islamic studies, quotes from the Qur'an and hadith, advice from scholars, reminders of Islamic holidays, and education on Islamic values are regularly published. These contents not only function as information media but also represent the identity, values, and da'wah character built by Pesantren Nurul Jadid. This representation is manifested through the use of language, visuals, symbols, colors, narratives, and content presentation formats designed to construct certain meanings among audiences, particularly university students. Thus, the Instagram account is not only a means of information dissemination but also a space for meaning construction that shapes the perspectives, understanding, and religious attitudes of its followers (Pratama, 2024).

University students, as a group that has grown up in the digital era, are active social media users with relatively high usage intensity. Besides using Instagram as a communication and entertainment medium, they also access various religious contents scattered across the platform. From the perspective of religious literacy, students' capabilities are not only measured by how much religious information they receive, but also by their ability to understand,

interpret, evaluate, and implement religious messages in their daily lives. Therefore, students' responses to da'wah content presented on the Instagram account @pesantrennuruljadid become an important aspect to examine because each individual has different backgrounds of knowledge, experience, and literacy capabilities in interpreting a message. These differences allow for various forms of reception, ranging from full acceptance of the message, acceptance accompanied by meaning negotiation, to rejection of parts of the received message.

On the other hand, the development of social media also presents various challenges in digital da'wah dissemination. The ease for every individual to produce and share content causes religious information to circulate in very large quantities with diverse quality. Not all information comes from sources with adequate scholarly competence, which can potentially lead to misunderstandings in understanding Islamic teachings. This phenomenon shows that the success of digital da'wah is not only determined by the intensity of content dissemination, but also by how the message is represented, understood, and responded to by the audience. In other words, the effectiveness of da'wah communication cannot be measured solely by the number of followers, views, or interaction rates on social media, but also by the message's ability to build correct religious understanding in accordance with Islamic principles (Ferdhina et al., 2026).

Theoretically, this research is grounded in the concept of representation, which explains that media does not merely convey reality but also constructs meaning through the use of language, symbols, images, and various forms of visual communication. In the context of social media, every da'wah content published is a result of meaning construction that represents certain values according to the communicator's objectives. Additionally, this research also uses the perspective of religious literacy, which emphasizes individuals' ability to understand, interpret, evaluate, and implement religious teachings critically in social life. Thus, the relationship between da'wah message representation and students' responses becomes important to analyze because the meaning constructed by audiences is not always identical to the meaning intended by content creators. The responses that emerge are influenced by experience, educational background, culture, social environment, and each individual's level of religious literacy.

A number of previous studies have shown that social media, particularly Instagram, has been widely used as an effective digital da'wah medium in expanding the reach of religious information dissemination. Pratama's (2024) research examined da'wah through Islamic comics on Instagram, while Arista et al. (2025) studied Instagram social media as da'wah communication to improve religious knowledge among Generation Z. Kurniawan et al. (2025) compared religious communication of pesantrens on Instagram, and Hafidh (2023) analyzed the representation of millennial santri in digital literacy discourse. These studies generally concluded that the use of visual content, short videos, and attractive communication design can increase audience attention to da'wah messages. Other research also found that social media contributes to building interaction between da'wah institutions and society, as well as strengthening Islamic identity among the younger generation.

There is a significant research gap from these studies. First, most research still focuses on da'wah communication strategies, digital media effectiveness, or user engagement levels with published content, without deeply examining how da'wah messages are represented through visual elements, narratives, symbols, and language. Second, research that specifically examines da'wah message representation on pesantren institutions' social media accounts and students' responses to such representation from a religious literacy perspective is still relatively limited. Third, there is little research that uses official pesantren Instagram accounts as research objects from the perspective of media representation and religious literacy, particularly in pesantren-based higher education environments. Yet, aspects of representation and audience reception are crucial parts of understanding the success of da'wah communication in the digital era (Abidin, 2025).

The novelty of this research lies in the effort to integrate the study of da'wah message representation on the Instagram account @pesantrennuruljadid with the analysis of Universitas Nurul Jadid students' responses from a religious literacy perspective. This research not only describes the forms of da'wah messages published through social media, but also analyzes how the meaning of these messages is constructed through visual and verbal elements, how students respond to the messages they receive, and how the level of religious literacy affects the meaning-making process. Thus, this research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of digital da'wah communication studies, media representation, and religious literacy, as well as provide practical

recommendations for pesantren social media managers in developing more educational, credible, communicative da'wah content that meets the needs of the digital generation (Muhammad, 2025).

Based on this background, this research aims to: (1) analyze the representation of da'wah messages conveyed through the Instagram account @pesantrennuruljadid; (2) examine the responses of Universitas Nurul Jadid students to these da'wah messages; and (3) understand how the perspective of religious literacy influences the meaning-making process of da'wah messages by students.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of how dakwah (religious outreach) messages are represented on the @pesantrennuruljadid Instagram account and to examine the responses of Nurul Jadid University students (mahasantri) to these messages through the lens of religious literacy. A qualitative approach enables the researcher to examine the meanings embedded in the dakwah content while exploring the informants' experiences, understandings, and interpretations of the messages received via social media.

The primary research instrument is the researcher (acting as a "human instrument"), who is responsible for defining the research focus, collecting data, interpreting information, analyzing findings, and drawing conclusions. Data collection is supported by observation guidelines, semi-structured interview guides, audio recorders, cameras, and documentation including posts, images, videos, captions, and comments from the @pesantrennuruljadid Instagram account that are relevant to the research focus.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique involving the selection of participants based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives. These criteria include being a Nurul Jadid University student who actively uses Instagram, follows the @pesantrennuruljadid account, has accessed or interacted with the published dakwah content, and is willing to share their interpretations of and responses to that content. In addition to students, the researcher may also involve the Instagram account administrators as supporting informants to gather information regarding the objectives, processes, and strategies behind the presentation of the dakwah messages.

Data collection techniques include observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations focus on how dakwah messages are represented in the Instagram content specifically regarding the use of visuals, language, symbols, themes, and presentation styles. In-depth interviews are conducted to explore the students' responses, interpretations, and levels of understanding regarding the dakwah content they consume. Meanwhile, documentation is used to gather evidence such as screenshots of posts, captions, comments, content archives, and other documents that support the analysis process.

Data analysis employed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, comprising data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting information relevant to the representation of dakwah (religious outreach) messages and the responses of the students (mahasantri). The data were then presented as descriptive narratives organized by research themes to facilitate interpretation. The final stage drawing conclusions was conducted iteratively until credible findings that addressed the research focus were obtained.

Data validity was verified using source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from students, Instagram account administrators, and content documentation. Technique triangulation entailed comparing findings from observations, interviews, and documentation, while time triangulation involved collecting data at different times to ensure information consistency. These techniques were applied to enhance the credibility, dependability, and validity of the research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Representation of Da'wah Messages on the @pesantrennuruljadid Instagram Account.

Observations of the Instagram account @pesantrennuruljadid reveal that it serves not only as a platform for publicizing the pesantren's (Islamic boarding school) activities but also as a medium for presenting dakwah (Islamic outreach) messages in an engaging and communicative manner. This representation is evident in various posts, including documentation of religious activities, Quranic verses and Hadith citations, words of wisdom from the pesantren leader, short study videos, Islamic educational posters, and information regarding academic and pesantren-related activities. All content is presented by combining visual

elements, typography, color, and simple narratives, making it easily understandable for social media users, particularly the mahasantri (university students residing in the pesantren). One informant stated, "The content on the Pesantren Nurul Jadid Instagram account is easier to understand because the layout is attractive and the messages are concise; I am more inclined to read it compared to text-heavy posts" (Informant A, interview, 2026). These findings indicate that the packaging of messages is a crucial factor in capturing audience attention. From the perspective of Stuart Hall's representation theory, media does not merely convey information but also constructs meaning through the use of symbols, language, and visuals, meaning the reality perceived by the audience is a product of social construction. This finding aligns with research by Fitria (2024), which explains that Instagram is capable of shaping representations of Islamic values through a blend of visual elements and communicative narratives, thereby making dakwah messages more readily accepted by the digital generation (Artanti & Saefullah, 2025).

Based on an analysis of various posts, the representation of dakwah (religious outreach) messages on the @pesantrennuruljadid account predominantly highlights values such as moral character (akhlaq), character education, religious moderation, and the reinforcement of pesantren (Islamic boarding school) traditions. The content not only encourages the audience to enhance the quality of their acts of worship but also instills values of honesty, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and a love for knowledge. These messages are conveyed through documentation of students' activities, quotes from the masyayikh (senior religious scholars), and infographics themed around daily life, thereby creating a sense of closeness to the students' lived realities. One informant noted, "I often save posts containing advice from the pengasuh (head of the boarding school) because the content relates to daily life and serves as a reminder when I am facing problems" (Informant B, interview, 2026). This statement demonstrates that the representation of dakwah messages goes beyond mere information delivery; it also fosters an emotional connection between the message and the audience's experiences. According to Stuart Hall, meaning is not inherent in an object but is constructed through a process of representation involving language and culture. Consequently, the use of pesantren-related symbols in every post contributes to the institution's identity formation while reinforcing the image of Pesantren Nurul Jadid as an Islamic educational institution that adapts to the evolution of digital media. These

findings support the research of Hidayat (2023), which states that the social media platforms of Islamic educational institutions play a role in building institutional identity through visual representations and religious narratives.

Interview results also indicate that mahasantri (students of Islamic boarding schools) pay attention not only to the message content but also to the manner of its delivery. The majority of informants assessed that the use of simple graphic designs, consistent color schemes, short videos, and communicative captions made dakwah (religious outreach) messages easier to comprehend compared to delivery via long text. One informant stated, "If the video is short and gets straight to the core topic, I usually watch it to the end. Afterward, I often share it with friends via the 'story' feature" (Informant C, interview, 2026). These findings demonstrate that visual elements play a crucial role in capturing attention and influencing how the audience interprets a message. In Stuart Hall's theory of representation, visuals constitute a sign system that generates meaning through the processes of encoding by the message creator and decoding by the audience. This implies that the success of dakwah delivery is determined not only by the material content but also by how the message is constructed using visual elements tailored to the characteristics of the target audience. These research results reinforce the findings of Prasetyo and Nuraini (2024), which state that engaging visual design enhances the effectiveness of dakwah communication on social media because it captures user attention more effectively than conventional delivery methods (Arista et al., 2025).

Beyond visual aspects, this study found that the use of simple language is one of the forms of dakwah (religious outreach) representation most appreciated by university students. Much of the content employs persuasive, non-judgmental language that is easily understood by diverse audiences. Communicative language makes the dakwah message feel closer to everyday life, thereby making it more readily accepted by the audience. One informant stated, "I prefer content with casual language that still includes scriptural references; it doesn't feel preachy and is easier to understand" (Informant D, interview, 2026). These findings indicate that language is a crucial element in the process of representation, serving as the primary vehicle for constructing meaning. Stuart Hall explains that language functions not merely as a tool for communication but also as a system of representation that shapes how individuals perceive reality. Consequently, the use of inclusive language on the @pesantrenmuruljadid Instagram account serves as a dakwah communication strategy capable of

reaching university students with diverse religious backgrounds. This finding aligns with research by Rahmawati (2023), which concluded that the use of popular language in digital dakwah is more effective at fostering emotional connection with the younger generation than formal, rigid language.

Overall, the research findings indicate that the @pesantrennuruljadid Instagram account conveys dakwah (religious outreach) messages through a blend of visuals, language, symbols, and narratives that reflect the pesantren's (Islamic boarding school) identity and moderate Islamic values. This representation not only facilitates the dissemination of religious information but also shapes how mahasantri (Islamic boarding school students) interpret Islamic values in their daily lives. Viewed through the lens of Stuart Hall's representation theory, the published content constitutes a process of meaning construction aimed at fostering specific understandings among the audience. The success of this representation is evident in the positive response from students, who regard the Pesantren Nurul Jadid Instagram content as a source of religious information that is engaging, accessible, and relevant to the needs of the digital generation. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on the effectiveness of social media as a medium for dakwah, this research demonstrates that the success of digital dakwah also hinges on how messages are represented through visual, linguistic, and symbolic elements to construct meanings that are positively received by the students.

University Students Responses to Da'wah Messages from the @pesantrennuruljadid Instagram Account

Interview results indicate that students from Nurul Jadid University respond in various ways to the da'wah (religious outreach) messages published on the @pesantrennuruljadid Instagram account. Generally, the majority of informants offered positive feedback, as the content provided was deemed capable of delivering religious information relevant to daily life. Students view the account not merely as a medium for information regarding pesantren (Islamic boarding school) activities, but also as a source of motivation, a reminder for acts of worship, and an accessible platform for religious learning. One informant stated, "I check the Pesantren Nurul Jadid Instagram posts almost every day. Beyond keeping up with pesantren activities, I often receive advice that inspires me to improve my worship and daily conduct" (Informant E, interview, 2026). These findings demonstrate that the published da'wah messages foster an

emotional connection with the students, allowing the content to be perceived not just as information, but as a guide for living. From the perspective of Stuart Hall's reception theory, this situation reflects a dominant-hegemonic reading, wherein the audience accepts and interprets the message in alignment with the meaning constructed by the communicator. These research results align with the study by Ananda (2024), which suggests that digital da'wah content tailored to the characteristics of the younger generation tends to garner a positive reception from the audience (Hafidh, 2023).

Although the majority of informants responded positively, this study also found that some mahasantri (students of Islamic boarding schools who are also university students) interpreted dakwah (religious outreach) content selectively. Informants revealed that not all posts were immediately accepted as authoritative guidelines; instead, they were cross-referenced with other sources such as religious texts, lectures by ustadz (religious teachers), or explanations from university lecturers before being accepted. One informant explained, "If the material relates to Islamic law or differences of opinion among scholars, I usually seek additional explanations from religious texts or ask a teacher to avoid misunderstanding the content" (Informant F, interview, 2026). These findings indicate that mahasantri are not merely passive recipients of messages but actively engage in interpretation based on their existing knowledge and experience. In Stuart Hall's reception theory, this scenario constitutes a "negotiated reading," wherein the audience accepts the general message but adjusts the meaning based on their social context, experiences, and academic background. The findings demonstrate that the level of religious literacy influences how mahasantri interpret dakwah messages received via social media. These results support the research of Sari and Hidayat (2023), which states that audiences with adequate religious knowledge tend to be more critical when engaging with religious content on digital media.

This study also identified a small number of mahasantri (Islamic boarding school students attending university) who adopted a critical stance toward certain methods of presenting dakwah (religious outreach) content. They noted that some posts were too brief to fully explain a given religious issue. Furthermore, concerns were raised that simplifying material could lead to varied interpretations if not accompanied by in depth explanations. One informant remarked, "Sometimes the content is good, but because the duration is short, I feel I still need to seek further explanation to fully grasp the context" (Informant

G, interview, 2026). These findings indicate that the effectiveness of a dakwah message depends not only on the quality of its content but also on the completeness of the information conveyed. Within Stuart Hall's reception theory, this scenario can be categorized as a form of "oppositional reading" regarding specific aspects of message presentation where the audience accepts the general purpose of the dakwah but criticizes the manner of its delivery. These findings enrich previous research, which has largely focused on the success of social media as a medium for dakwah without examining the divergent interpretations that may arise among the audience (Kurniawan et al., 2025).

In addition to responding by interpreting meaning, mahasantri (Islamic boarding school students) also exhibit behavioral responses to the published content. Interview results indicate that most informants frequently "like" posts, reshare content via Instagram Stories, save posts deemed useful, and send content to friends or family via direct messages. Some informants also actively comment to express appreciation or engage in discussions regarding the dakwah (religious outreach) message. One informant stated, "If I find content that I think is good, I usually save it or share it with friends so they can also benefit from the dakwah message" (Informant H, interview, 2026). These findings demonstrate that the students' responses do not stop at the stage of meaning reception but evolve into active participation in disseminating the dakwah message. From the perspective of digital dakwah communication, this behavior shows that the audience acts not merely as information recipients but also as message disseminators (secondary communicators) who help expand the reach of dakwah via social media. These findings align with research by Pratama (2024), which notes that social media's interactive features foster a more participatory form of dakwah communication compared to conventional media.

Overall, the research results indicate that the students' responses to the @pesantrennuruljadid Instagram account are dominated by a positive reception of the represented dakwah messages. However, this reception process is not uniform, as it is influenced by each individual's educational background, religious experience, digital literacy skills, and level of religious literacy. Most students receive the message in line with the communicator's intent, while others negotiate the meaning they receive, and a small number adopt a critical stance regarding the content's presentation. These findings reveal that the success of digital dakwah communication is determined not only by the quality of the produced content but also by the audience's ability to understand, interpret, and

evaluate the messages received. Therefore, the @pesantrennuruljadid Instagram account serves not only as a medium for disseminating religious information but also as a space for interaction that enables the formation of diverse processes of meaning-making among mahasantri (Islamic boarding school students pursuing higher education), in accordance with the perspective of religious literacy.

CONCLUSION

Based on research regarding the representation of dakwah (religious outreach) messages and the responses of UNUJA students (mahasantri) to the @pesantrennuruljadid Instagram account viewed through the lens of religious literacy it can be concluded that the account represents dakwah messages through a blend of visual elements, language, symbols, and narratives. These elements reflect Islamic values, pesantren (Islamic boarding school) traditions, and a character of religious moderation. This representation manifests in various content forms, such as Quranic verses and hadith citations, counsel from religious scholars, documentation of pesantren activities, educational posters, and short dakwah videos, all presented using communicative language and engaging visual designs. From the perspective of representation theory, this content serves not merely as a medium for information delivery but also constructs the meaning and identity of Pesantren Nurul Jadid as an Islamic educational institution that adapts to digital technological advancements.

Student responses to the dakwah messages published on the @pesantrennuruljadid Instagram account show a positive trend. The majority of students accept and interpret these messages as sources of information, motivation, and reminders for practicing Islamic teachings. However, some informants also demonstrate a critical attitude by verifying information obtained via social media against other scholarly sources such as the Quran, *hadith*, classical religious texts (kitab), and explanations from teachers and lecturers. These varying responses indicate that the process of interpreting messages is influenced by each student's background knowledge, experience, and level of religious literacy.

From the perspective of religious literacy, the representation of dakwah messages on the @pesantrennuruljadid Instagram account contributes to enhancing students' abilities to understand, interpret, evaluate, and implement Islamic values in their daily lives. While social media can serve as an effective tool for religious education, its success ultimately depends on the users' digital

and religious literacy skills in filtering and verifying the information they receive. Therefore, the management of dakwah content that is credible, contextual, and educational must be continuously developed so that social media serves not merely as a platform for publication, but also as a space for religious learning capable of fostering an understanding of Islam that is moderate, critical, and aligned with the needs of the digital generation.

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