Enhancing Islamic Outreach through Information Technology: An Analysis of Social Media Use by Religious Teachers in Remote Areas

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Abstract
This study explores the understanding and utilization of information technology by religious teachers for the dissemination of Islamic teachings (da'wah) in the remote Limbang Division of Sarawak. The primary objective is to assess religious teachers' familiarity and proficiency in using social media and information technology to reach and engage with their communities effectively. Data was collected from 126 religious teachers through a structured questionnaire, capturing demographic aspects such as gender and age, as well as their comprehension and use of technology in the context of da'wah. Findings reveal a high level of awareness and adoption, with 75.4% of respondents indicating a strong understanding of utilizing technology for da'wah and 87.3% agreeing that its use is essential in the current era. Although a small subset remains less informed on its significance, the study suggests this as a minor barrier. To strengthen the effectiveness of da'wah, it is recommended that religious institutions provide ongoing training and accessible resources, enhancing teachers' skills in social media and technology use. Such support could enable religious teachers to adapt their teaching methods to a digital-centric society, making da'wah outreach more relevant and impactful.
Keywords: Religious Teachers, Information Technology, Islamic Outreach, Social Media, Sarawak Remote Areas, Da'wah Dissemination.

Introduction

Da'wah in Islam has a profound history, beginning with Prophet Noah (AS) and continuing through to Prophet Muhammad (SAW). These prophets are recognized as prominent *da'ie* (preachers) sent by Allah to guide humanity towards the true path. Da'wah is an essential responsibility for every Muslim, as emphasized in the Quran:

"Indeed, this is My straight path, so follow it. And do not follow other paths, for they will separate you from His path. This He has instructed you that you may become righteous."
(Surah Al-An'am: 153)

This verse underscores the importance of following the straight path in religious life and highlights the role of *da'ie* in guiding humanity toward truth. In this context, a preacher must grasp the approaches, techniques, or methods (*uslub*) in delivering *da'wah*. This involves not only religious knowledge but also understanding how to effectively convey it according to varying circumstances and times (Latif, 2023).

One significant example of adaptable and strategic da'wah can be seen in the story of Prophet Ibrahim (AS). Known for his profound wisdom and ability to tailor his message to the audience, Ibrahim (AS) used different approaches to challenge the idol worshippers of his time, whether by reasoning with his father or dismantling their idols to demonstrate the futility of their beliefs. His methods exemplify the importance of understanding one's audience and context in delivering the message of Islam effectively (Ramli et al. 2022; Ramli et al. 2023)

In today's world, this adaptability in da'wah is particularly critical, especially with the advent of technology and the rise of social media. The ability of da'ie to reach diverse audiences, including those in remote areas, has been transformed through these platforms. This article aims to explore how contemporary religious teachers can draw inspiration from the methods of past prophets like Ibrahim (AS) while utilizing modern tools like social media to expand the reach of their da'wah.

Methodology

This study utilized a structured methodology involving data collection through questionnaires distributed to 126 religious teachers in Sarawak. The questionnaire was designed to gauge the respondents' understanding of the importance of information technology in spreading *da'wah*. It contained various statements covering demographic information, comprehension of information technology, and challenges faced by religious teachers in utilizing technology for *da'wah* purposes.

The researcher used Google Forms to develop and analyze the survey, facilitating efficient and systematic data collection. The data gathered were then quantitatively analyzed to produce statistics that reflect respondents' opinions and understanding. The analysis was divided into two primary sections: Respondent Demographics and Research Findings Report. In the Demographics section, the researcher examined respondent characteristics such as gender and age. Meanwhile, in the Research Findings Report, the focus was on responses to statements related to understanding and applying information technology in *da'wah*.

Through this approach, the study provides a clear insight into religious teachers' attitudes toward technology and suggests necessary steps to enhance their understanding and use of technology in *da'wah* contexts.

The Use of Information Technology in Da'wah

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) over recent decades has brought significant change across nearly every facet of life, including in the spread of *da'wah*. As a highly impactful field of knowledge, ICT has opened new avenues for Muslims to disseminate religious teachings globally with greater ease and speed. In Malaysia, ICT has evolved rapidly, providing a substantial opportunity for *da'ie* (Islamic preachers) to expand their outreach.

ICT has become a crucial tool in achieving a developed nation status, and Muslims are encouraged to master these skills to keep pace with the progress around them. God has bestowed technology as a blessing for humanity, and Muslims must fully utilize this gift to advance the goals of *da'wah*. Alongside these technological developments, proactive *da'ie* are encouraged to use ICT as a medium to conduct *da'wah* more efficiently and effectively. This integration of ICT into *da'wah* efforts ensures that Islamic outreach aligns with modern advancements, reaching diverse audiences in ways that are relevant and impactful.

Technology as an Effective Medium for Da'wah

The advancements in information technology have significantly impacted the dissemination of *da'wah*. With the convenience of the internet, *da'wah* can now be delivered to a broader audience in a shorter amount of time. Social media platforms, websites, mobile apps, and various other digital channels have transformed the way *da'wah* is conducted, allowing the message of Islam to be shared not only through traditional methods but also through a range of digital formats.

ICT also facilitates more direct and immediate interaction between *da'ie* and the community, creating opportunities for dynamic discussions where religious questions can be answered instantly through digital platforms. This utilization of information technology ensures that Islamic *da'wah* remains relevant and adapts to the rapid pace of globalization, keeping its message accessible and effective in a constantly evolving world.

The Importance of Da'wah Through Information Technology

In this fast-paced modern era, various challenges have emerged that impact society, including those affecting the delivery of *da'wah*. Preachers must not fall behind in keeping up with the rapid development of information technology, which has now become a primary tool in social interactions. The explosion of communication technologies, especially through the internet, provides a vast platform for preachers to engage with society online. This makes *da'wah* more accessible and relevant to today's generation, who rely heavily on technology for information.

Nowadays, *da'wah* needs to be more practical and should leverage diverse technological platforms to spread Islam effectively. As society increasingly depends on information technology as their main source of knowledge, using this technology as a medium

for *da'wah* is considered more impactful and efficient. Information technology can reach vast audiences without limitations of time and place. The widespread availability of the internet, accessible in almost every home, offers a unique opportunity for *da'wah* to be delivered to various segments of society, transcending geographical barriers.

Another major advantage of *da'wah* through information technology is its interactive nature. Technology enables preachers to engage in two-way communication with their audience, answering questions and providing detailed explanations swiftly. This method not only makes *da'wah* more easily accepted but also fosters more open dialogue. With this interactive quality, preachers can more effectively reach their target audience, ensuring that the message of Islam is clearly conveyed and well-understood.

Preachers also need to be more creative and flexible when addressing modern society. They must adapt their *da'wah* delivery methods to align with the way technology is used by today's society. Messages conveyed visually through videos, infographics, and social media can be more engaging and easier to comprehend, particularly for younger generations who prefer to use technology in their daily lives (Latif,2021).

In conclusion, *da'wah* through information technology is an urgent necessity in the modern world. It not only provides a vast opportunity to broaden the reach of Islam, but it also allows preachers to deliver religious messages more effectively, reaching larger audiences, and adapting *da'wah* to the needs of contemporary society.

The Role of Information Technology According to Islam
In modern life, information has become a vital foundation for the well-being and advancement of humanity. People require information and knowledge from various sources, whether directly or through mass media. The media plays a vast role in society, serving as a primary channel for disseminating news, knowledge, and entertainment. In Islam, the media is viewed as a crucial medium for *da'wah*, used to convey truth and address issues important to the Muslim community. Islamic media is not only a source of information but also acts as a defense against misleading foreign propaganda that could misguide Muslims. Furthermore, it strengthens and upholds Islamic positions on various matters (Mutalib, 2011).

From an Islamic perspective, the media holds great responsibility in fulfilling the goals of guiding society toward a deeper understanding of religion. One of the primary aims of Islamic media is to protect the community from ignorance regarding religious teachings, shape the Muslim ummah's mindset to firmly adhere to *aqidah* (faith) and *shariah* (Islamic law), and foster a society with noble character. In today's world, dominated by technological and informational explosions, mass media wields significant influence in shaping the thoughts and behaviors of society. With widespread access to technology, information—whether good or harmful—can be transmitted rapidly across all societal levels, regardless of geographic location.

However, media should not function merely as a tool for entertainment. In the context of *da'wah*, the primary role of media is as a guide, preacher, and educator. Media must ensure that the content it broadcasts aids in the development of a more cultured and progressive society based on Islamic values. Unfortunately, in reality, there is often an imbalance, where

entertainment overshadows the educational role. Entertainment becomes dominant due to commercial interests and ratings, while education is frequently sidelined. To address this issue, media must adhere to an ethical code rooted in Islamic principles, ensuring that educational value and wisdom (*hikmah*) are prioritized in every broadcasted content.

In conclusion, the role of media in Islam is far-reaching and essential in spreading *da'wah*, educating society, and preserving the moral integrity of the Muslim community. By maximizing its potential, particularly through information technology, media can play a transformative role in guiding society in accordance with Islamic teachings.

The Principle of Wisdom in Islamic Media

The concept of *hikmah* or wisdom is crucial in the management of media according to Islamic principles. *Hikmah* refers to the wisdom in adapting media content to the target audience, which consists of people from various backgrounds, ages, and needs. The goal is to ensure that the programs broadcast are timely and relevant to the viewers, and that the content educates and encourages people towards goodness, progress, and well-being, with a foundation in noble character.

Responsible media must ensure that the programs aired do not neglect the element of entertainment, but that entertainment aligns with Islamic principles. While entertainment is not forbidden in Islam, the way it is presented must not conflict with *shariah* law. This ensures that viewers are not only entertained but also gain educational and moral benefits.

In essence, media guided by the principle of *hikmah* seeks to strike a balance between providing enjoyment and delivering meaningful content that enriches the mind and soul, promoting Islamic values in a way that resonates with diverse audiences.

Ethics and Responsibility in Media Usage in Islam

Islam places significant emphasis on ethical aspects in the dissemination of information, including a strong prohibition against slander, revealing others' faults, or spreading false news. This prohibition is underscored in the Quran through warnings about the dangers of *ghibah* (backbiting), as it can lead to division and discord within society. Unfortunately, in today's media landscape, especially within entertainment programs, the act of disseminating rumors and sensational stories is often employed to attract viewer attention, despite the potential harm to individuals and their families.

Islamic media must exercise caution to avoid becoming entangled in the spread of unverifiable information or in humiliating others. Such practices not only contravene Islamic principles but also invite discord among the community. Therefore, it is essential for media to adhere to journalistic ethics grounded in Islamic law, prioritizing truth and safeguarding the dignity of every individual within society.

In conclusion, information technology in Islam serves as an important tool for conveying truth, educating society, and upholding Islamic values. The media, as a key component of information technology, bears a significant responsibility to act ethically and wisely, ensuring that the functions of da'wah are effectively carried out while protecting the community from elements that could undermine moral integrity and faith.

Da'wah Through Information Technology

With the advancement of the times, information and communication technology (ICT) has brought about significant transformations in the methods of delivering da'wah. The internet, websites, blogs, social media, and digital applications have become primary platforms for disseminating Islamic teachings. Da'wah conducted through information technology, such as websites developed by figures like Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Hasrizal Jamil (Al-Idrus, 2009), has expanded the reach of Islamic messages, allowing them to reach a larger audience regardless of location or time.

One of the main advantages of da'wah through information technology is its ability to quickly reach a global audience without geographical limitations. With technology such as the internet, da'wah practitioners can disseminate their messages to millions of people in a short amount of time. Information technology also enables more dynamic and effective interactions through visual, audio, and interactive media such as videos, podcasts, and live broadcasts. Furthermore, proficiency in information technology allows da'wah practitioners to counter and respond to slanders and accusations directed at Islam more effectively and promptly.

In this context, da'wah programs broadcast through electronic media, such as radio and television, also play a crucial role. Da'wah programs in Malaysia aired by the government through channels like RTM and TV AlHijrah have received positive responses from the general public. Electronic media help to broaden the dissemination of da'wah to communities that may not have the opportunity to attend lectures or sermons in person.

Impact of Information Technology on the Delivery of Da'wah

Psychologically, da'wah practitioners who utilize information technology in their delivery can have a more significant impact on their audience. The visual and interactive approaches employed through LCD screens, audio, and computer software such as PowerPoint enhance the focus and interest of viewers, preventing fatigue and opening their minds to the messages being conveyed. Educational psychology research indicates that teaching methods involving both auditory and visual elements lead to better comprehension compared to relying solely on auditory input (Latif, 2021).

The Necessity of Values and Ethics in Da'wah Through Information Technology

The advent of information technology in the modern era is inevitable. It has become one of the new civilizations in the realm of global communication and information. With information technology, society now has access to a wide range of information, regardless of whether it is for personal, educational, business, or other purposes. This phenomenon is viewed as a revolution in communication and information that brings various implications for the way da'wah is conducted.

However, in the early stages of this technology's introduction, many Islamic scholars viewed it with skepticism, fearing it would lead to negative consequences such as cultural crises, moral decline, loss of respect for religious norms, and distortion of knowledge. Therefore, it is crucial to establish comprehensive ethical standards to address the potential issues arising from the information technology explosion.

1.   **Noble Values**
Noble values refer to positive principles that can build harmony, strength, and development for individuals and society. Values such as honesty, loyalty, and justice should be promoted within the context of information technology, where the Internet serves as a primary communication tool. Users of information technology, especially in the context of da'wah, must adhere to these values. For example, Internet users should be aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding the information they disseminate. Da'wah practitioners should also ensure that the messages and news they convey add value to society. Practicing these noble values will make da'wah practitioners more sincere and genuine in their efforts to spread Islamic teachings (Rashid, 2001).

2.   **Moral Values**
Moral values serve as fundamental principles in shaping individuals and society with integrity. In this context, the actions of defending good, rejecting evil, and advocating for truth must be enhanced in modern society. Awareness of individual morals is essential, as it will lead to the emergence of an excellent society. Although da'wah through information technology does not involve the physical presence of the practitioner, the delivery methods used will reflect the practitioner's morals. Therefore, it is vital for da'wah practitioners to demonstrate high moral values in every interaction and communication on technology platforms.

Da'wah through information technology necessitates the clear and effective application of values and ethics. In the effort to strengthen da'wah messages and counter negative influences, practitioners should always adhere to noble and high moral values. By doing so, they can ensure that information technology serves as a positive and effective tool in conveying Islamic teachings to society and contributes to the development of a better and more civilized community (Ramli, 2022).

Analysis of Information Technology Use Among Religious Teachers
This chapter will discuss the results of data analysis and findings obtained from feedback collected through questionnaires distributed to 126 respondents, focusing on religious teachers in rural schools, specifically in the Limbang Division. This study aims to assess the level of understanding among religious teachers and the challenges they face in mastering information technology for the dissemination of da'wah in the Limbang Division.

The data collected was analyzed and processed using Google Forms software, which facilitated the creation and analysis of the questionnaire. The analysis process is divided into two main sections: Respondent Demographics and Research Findings Report. Each section provides deeper insights into the feedback received and allows for a better understanding of the current state of religious teachers concerning the use of information technology for da'wah.

The overall analysis will be presented alongside relevant descriptions, providing a clear picture of the study's results and its implications.

Respondent Demographics
In this study, a total of 126 religious teachers participated as respondents in the questionnaire. The demographic information collected includes details about Gender, Age, and Status of the respondents.

Gender
Chart 1: Gender of Respondents
Out of the 126 respondents who provided feedback, the data indicates that 57.1% (72 individuals) are female respondents, while 42.9% (54 individuals) are male respondents. This result demonstrates that the number of female respondents exceeds that of male respondents, which may reflect the active involvement of women in the field of religious education.
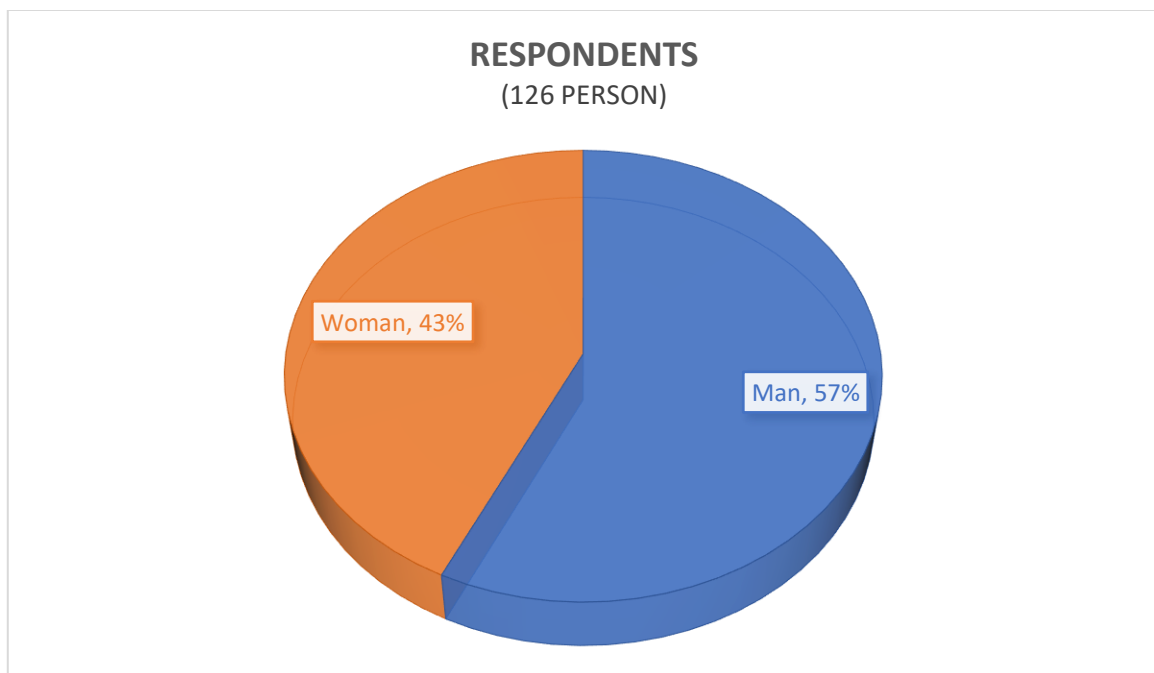

RESPONDENTS
(126 PERSON)

Woman, 43%

Man, 57%

Chart 1

Chart 2: Age of Respondents
The respondents are categorized into four age groups:
- **25 to 35 years old**: 40.5% (51 individuals)
- **36 to 45 years old**: 25.4% (32 individuals)
- **46 to 55 years old**: 26.2% (33 individuals)
- **56 to 65 years old**: 7.9% (10 individuals)

This distribution highlights that the majority of respondents fall within the 25 to 35 age group, indicating a relatively young demographic among the religious teachers participating in the study.

Respondents
(126 Person)

- 25 to 35 years old — 41%
- 36 to 45 years old — 25%
- 46 to 55 years old — 26%
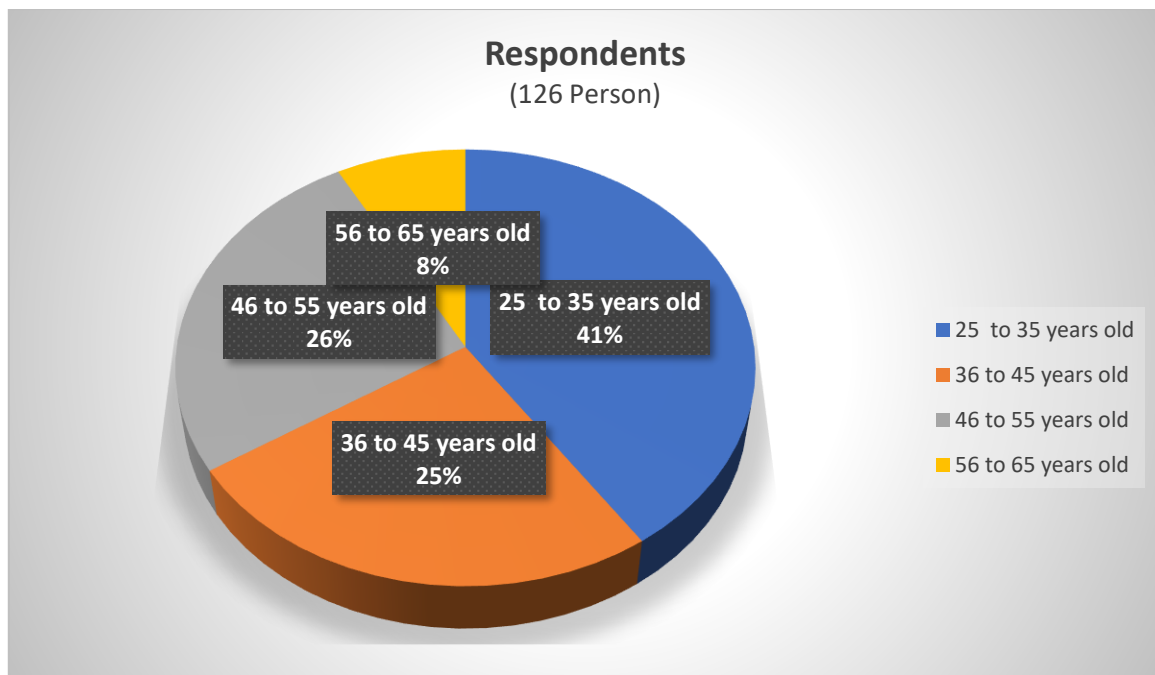- 56 to 65 years old — 8%

Chart 2

This finding indicates that the majority of religious teachers in rural schools, specifically in the Limbang Division, involved in the study are aged between 25 and 35, followed by those in the 46 to 55 age group. This may reflect the presence of a motivated younger generation eager to deepen and disseminate religious knowledge, while the more experienced generation contributes to the diversity in teaching and the dissemination of da'wah.

In this section, the analysis is based on three questions related to the use of information technology among religious teachers. Below are the results of the analysis for the first question concerning the types of applications used for sharing knowledge.
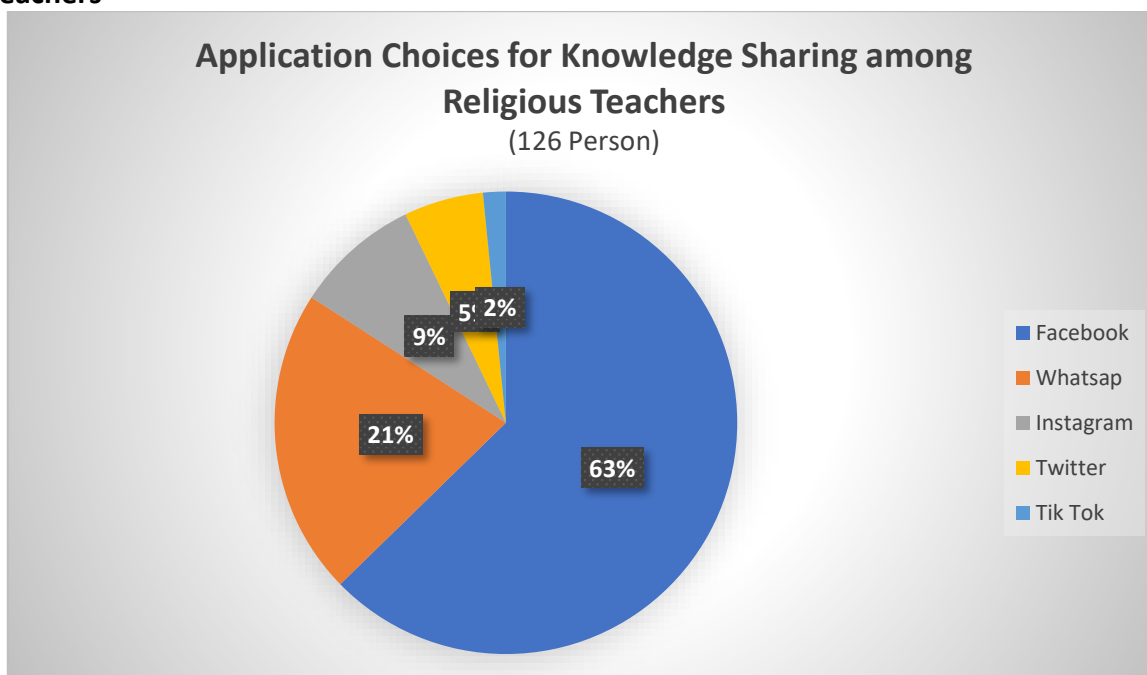
Chart 3: Question One: Application Choices for Knowledge Sharing among Religious Teachers

Chart 3

Chart 3 illustrates the applications commonly used by religious teachers for sharing knowledge. Five application options were listed, and the results are as follows:

- **Facebook**: This emerged as the primary choice, with 79 respondents (62.7%) selecting it as the most frequently used application. This indicates that religious teachers view Facebook as an effective platform for sharing and disseminating knowledge within the community.
- **WhatsApp**: Following closely, 27 respondents (21.4%) opted for this application. WhatsApp may be favored for its ease of direct communication and the quick transmission of messages and documents.
- **Instagram**: There were 11 respondents (8.7%) who chose this application. Instagram, with its visual features, may be less suitable for the type of knowledge sharing that requires more in-depth explanation.
- **Twitter**: Only 7 respondents (5.6%) selected this application. While Twitter is a popular platform for news and up-to-date information, the limited space for writing may hinder religious teachers from sharing knowledge in detail.
- **TikTok**: Only 2 respondents (1.6%) chose this application. This suggests that, despite its growing popularity, TikTok may not be viewed as an appropriate platform for delivering deeper or more formal knowledge.

From these findings, it can be concluded that religious teachers are more inclined to use Facebook for knowledge sharing purposes. This preference may be attributed to the accessibility, interactive features, and capacity to share information with a broader audience. The use of other applications like WhatsApp also underscores the importance of direct communication in disseminating knowledge; however, overall, Facebook dominates as the primary choice.
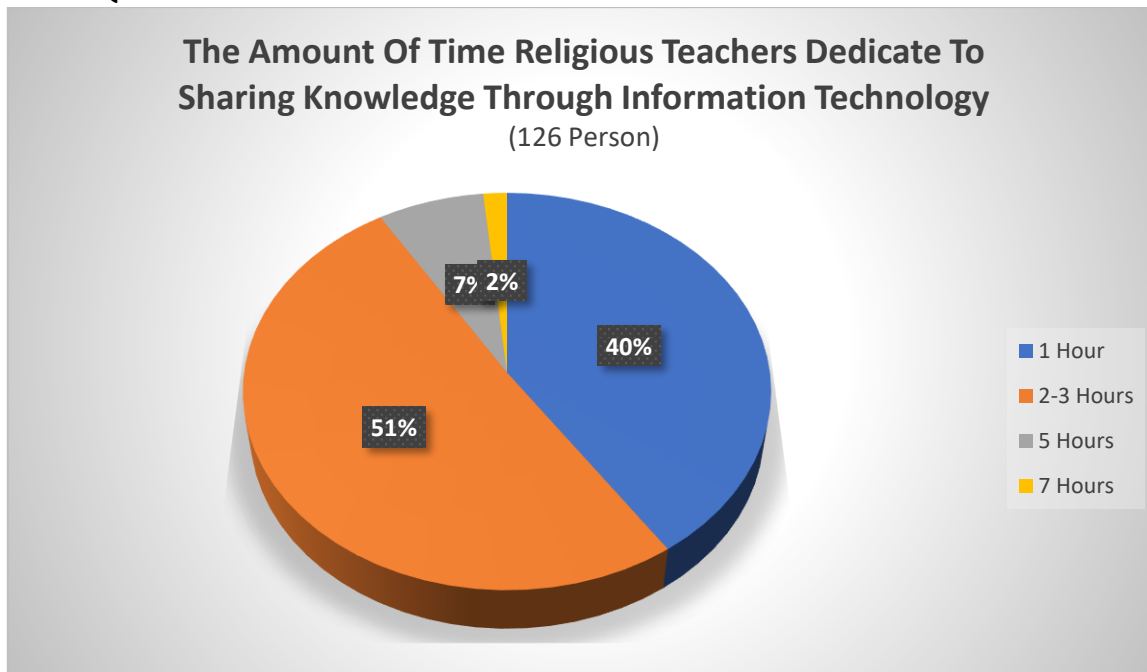
Chart 4: Question Two

Chart 4

Chart 4 illustrates the amount of time religious teachers dedicate to sharing knowledge through information technology. Four time options were provided to the respondents, and the analysis results are as follows:

- **2 to 3 Hours**: This option was the most selected, with 64 respondents (50.8%) choosing it. This indicates that religious teachers generally spend a significant amount of time sharing knowledge through information technology, with this duration considered ideal for conveying information in a more in-depth and interactive manner.
- **1 Hour**: Selected by 51 respondents (40.5%). This shows that although the time spent is shorter, there remains a desire to impart information, possibly in a more concise or basic format.
- **5 Hours**: Only 9 respondents (7.1%) chose this duration. This may suggest that longer sessions are less favored or may be impractical for religious teachers in their daily schedules.
- **7 Hours**: Only 2 respondents (1.6%) selected this option. The very small number indicates that such an extended period for sharing knowledge is less realistic and may not be feasible in everyday contexts.

From these findings, it can be concluded that the duration of 2 to 3 hours is the most commonly spent time by religious teachers in sharing knowledge through information technology. This suggests that they strive to provide a deeper and more beneficial understanding to their audience.
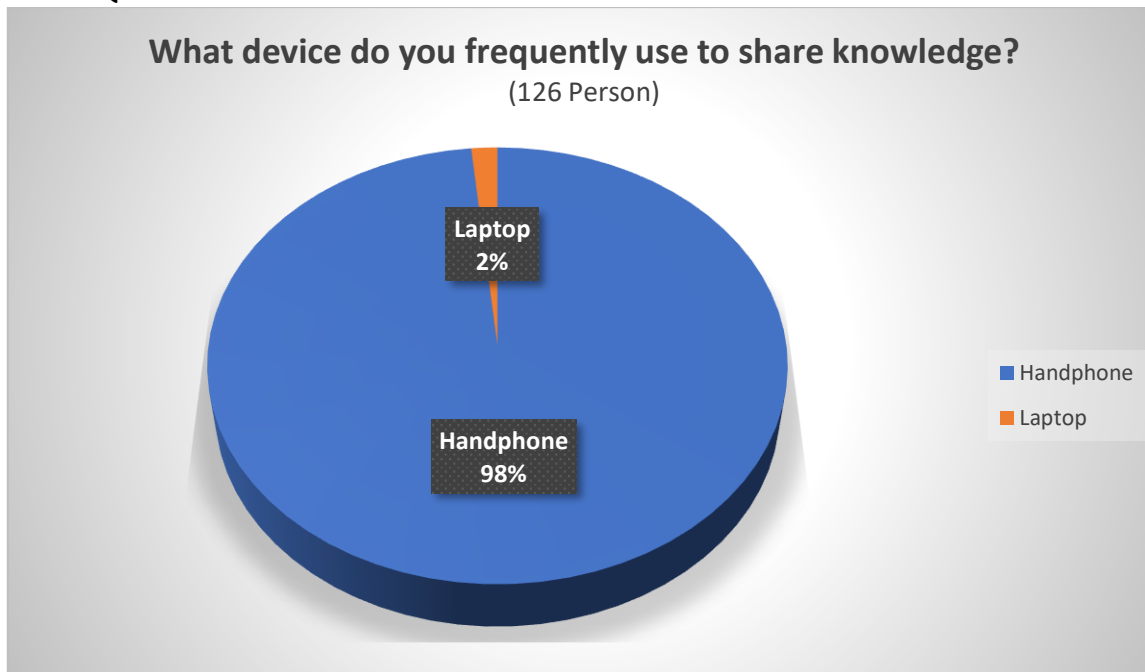
Chart 5: Question Three

Chart 5

Chart 5 presents the choice between two types of information technology devices, namely laptops and smartphones, used in the dissemination of Islamic teachings. The analysis results indicate:

- **Smartphone**: This option recorded a significantly high percentage of 98.4%, equivalent to 124 respondents. This suggests that smartphones are the most dominant and popular tool among religious educators for sharing and disseminating knowledge. The accessibility, mobility, and variety of available applications on smartphones likely contribute to this preference.
- **Laptop**: Only 2 respondents (1.6%) selected laptops as a frequently used tool. This shows that laptops are less frequently chosen by religious educators, possibly due to the need for mobility and the convenience that smartphones offer.
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From these findings, it is clear that smartphones have become the primary tool for religious educators in disseminating Islamic teachings. The smartphone's ability to quickly access information and share knowledge with ease makes it an ideal choice in the digital age.

Summary
First: The Concept of Da'wah Through Information Technology

Based on the study conducted, it can be summarized that the concept of da'wah through information technology encompasses the use of Information Technology (IT) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as primary tools for the processing, dissemination, and storage of information. This use of technology extends beyond the internet and computers, involving various devices and platforms that facilitate the rapid and effective flow of information. In other words, da'wah through information technology is an approach to deliver messages and perform da'wah efforts using the communication media available today.

Da'wah through information technology can be understood as the process of flowing, disseminating, processing, and storing information using technological mediums. In this context, technology serves as an enabler, allowing information to be conveyed quickly and efficiently. The application of information technology in da'wah facilitates broader access to information, enhancing reach to a larger community. Islamic da'wah is not merely an activity of delivering information; it also encompasses the values and principles of Islam that need to be integrated into all aspects of human life.

This study further concludes that there are various types of information technology that can be utilized in the da'wah process. These include blogging services, social networking services, microblogging, media-sharing services, and forums. Each of these mediums offers effective platforms for da'wah dissemination, allowing da'wah practitioners to convey their messages directly and interactively to various segments of society.

Overall, the integration of information technology in da'wah opens new opportunities to expand the reach and impact of da'wah in the digital era. Through the use of various platforms, religious educators and da'wah practitioners can reach a broader audience, disseminate Islamic values, and make a positive impact within the community.

Second: Level of Religious Teachers' Understanding of the Importance of Mastering Information Technology in Da'wah Dissemination

Based on the conducted study, it can be concluded that the level of understanding among religious teachers regarding the importance of mastering information technology for da'wah dissemination is very high. The survey results presented in Chapter 4 indicate that religious teachers responded positively about their understanding of the role of information technology in da'wah, particularly in Sarawak.

Although a few teachers remain uncertain or lack full understanding of the importance of information technology, this issue is not considered a significant obstacle. The findings reveal that the majority (75.4%) of religious teachers have a strong grasp of the concept of da'wah through information technology, indicating their awareness of the potential for technology to enhance the effectiveness of their message.

Furthermore, 87.3% of religious teachers agreed that the use of information technology is crucial for expanding da'wah in the present era. This reflects their awareness of the need to adapt da'wah approaches to current technological and societal developments. Additionally, 81.7% acknowledged that da'wah methods should evolve with the times, showing a deep understanding of the ever-changing social and technological dynamics.

Moreover, 84.1% of religious teachers expressed that mastery of information technology is vital for effectively disseminating da'wah to the community, reflecting their commitment to employing technology as a tool to achieve da'wah objectives.

The study also revealed that 79.4% of religious teachers recognize that society today is more accessible through information technology, indicating their understanding of shifts in societal interactions and the need to adapt accordingly. Finally, 73.8% of religious teachers stated that delivering da'wah using information technology is easier and more effective.

Overall, these findings suggest that religious teachers in Sarawak possess a solid understanding of the importance of information technology in da'wah dissemination. However, there remains room for improvement in terms of technical knowledge and application among certain individuals.

Conclusion

This study concludes that religious teachers demonstrate a strong understanding of the importance of mastering information technology in spreading da'wah. The majority of respondents recognize that technology, particularly social media, plays a crucial role in connecting with the public and delivering da'wah messages more effectively. However, a small number of teachers have yet to fully grasp or utilize the potential of this technology. Therefore, it is essential to further empower the use of social media for da'wah and educational purposes.

To maximize social media use, several strategic recommendations are proposed:

First, schools and religious educational institutions should regularly organize training sessions and workshops on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. This approach would equip teachers with practical knowledge and skills in utilizing these platforms for da'wah and teaching. Additionally, engaging in online groups or communities focused on da'wah could provide religious teachers with valuable opportunities to exchange experiences and effective strategies for social media use.

Secondly, the promotion of high-quality da'wah content on social media is necessary. Teachers could be encouraged to create and share impactful da'wah materials—such as short videos, articles, and infographics—that resonate with the hearts and minds of the public. This approach could make da'wah more appealing and relevant to younger audiences active on these platforms.

Finally, collaboration between religious teachers, local authorities, da'wah organizations, and community leaders can further strengthen this initiative. Through joint efforts, a range of da'wah programs could be implemented more broadly and effectively, reaching a wider audience with a positive message. By maximizing social media's potential, we can not only strengthen da'wah efforts but also bring Islamic teachings closer to society in this digital age.

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