

Zakat Open Courseware: A Digital Dakwah Approach to Zakat

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Abstract

This article examines *Zakat Open Courseware (ZOC)* as a digital *dakwah* initiative aimed at improving zakat education through structured, accessible online learning. As digital platforms become central to religious communication, many existing resources lack consistency, authenticity, and quality control. Using references from concept papers, journals, and books, this study highlights the need for preachers (*da'i*) to develop strong digital competencies to deliver accurate, engaging, and credible content. In the realm of zakat, digital tools such as mobile apps and online portals have made calculation, payment, and education more efficient and widely accessible. These tools strengthen zakat's role in Islamic social finance, yet concerns remain regarding governance, content standardisation, and institutional trust. Similarly, Open Courseware offers flexible access to Islamic education, particularly for underserved communities, but faces issues including inconsistent curricula, limited digital infrastructure, and a shortage of qualified instructors. The findings suggest that ZOC has the potential to enhance public understanding and compliance by providing context-sensitive, interactive, and reliable educational materials. However, to realise this potential, collaboration among scholars, educators, policymakers, and tech experts is necessary to ensure the quality and credibility of digital Islamic education. This article argues that embracing digital solutions like ZOC is essential to adapt zakat education and *dakwah* to contemporary needs while safeguarding the integrity of Islamic teachings.

Keywords: Zakat Open Courseware (ZOC), Digital, Dakwah, Islamic, Education

Introduction

Dakwah is the effort to invite and encourage people to fulfil their responsibilities in line with human nature. It calls on individuals to believe in Allah, live with faith and devotion, uphold what is right, and avoid what is wrong. In today's fast-paced technological era, preachers must

adopt a digital da'wah approach to effectively reach and engage their target audiences as communication methods continue to evolve.

Zakat, one of the foundational pillars of Islam, functions as a key instrument for wealth redistribution and social welfare. In an era shaped by rapid technological advancement, there is a growing need to revitalise zakat education through innovative digital means. The Zakat Open Courseware, framed within the concept of digital *dakwah*, offers an accessible and contemporary platform to disseminate accurate and relevant knowledge about zakat. By leveraging open educational resources, this approach aims to strengthen public understanding, respond to modern challenges, and encourage more effective zakat management. Through insights from experts, this study highlights the significance of developing zakat-focused open courseware as part of a broader effort to make *dakwah* more inclusive, engaging, and impactful in the digital age.

Research Objectives

- To examine the effectiveness of Open Courseware (OCW) as a digital *dakwah* tool in enhancing public understanding and engagement with zakat education.
- To explore the digital competencies required by contemporary *da'i* (preachers) to deliver credible and engaging zakat-related content through interactive online platforms.

Research Questions

- How does the use of Open Courseware influence the accessibility, credibility, and comprehension of zakat education among diverse audiences?
- What digital skills and competencies are essential for *da'i* to effectively communicate zakat principles and engage with audiences in a digital *dakwah* environment?

Literature Review

The Urgency of Digital Competencies Among Da'i

In the context of digital *dakwah*, preachers must understand the motivations and needs of their audiences to deliver content that is relevant and engaging. Interactivity highlights the importance of two-way communication between the *da'i* (preacher) and the *mad'u* (audience). Digital media offers a high level of interactivity, enabling audiences to engage directly with *da'i* through comments, private messages, and discussion forums. This interaction can enhance audience engagement and strengthen the connection between preachers and their *mad'u* (Kasir & Awali, 2024).

Digital *dakwah* is no longer a choice but has become a central medium for spreading Islamic teachings. Preachers today, especially young preachers, must be equipped with skills in journal writing, creative thinking, photography, and the use of audio-visual tools through emerging social media platforms. Digital *dakwah* requires proficiency in the latest technological tools, presentation techniques, and telecommunication systems. If this opportunity is not seized to convey the message of Islam, society risks being overwhelmed by falsehood and moral decline (Berhanundin et. al, 2022). Digital *dakwah* can be made engaging when delivered through diverse and creative methods that capture public interest. Various multimedia technologies can be utilised to present a clear and accurate understanding of Islam. Even animation can be an effective tool to draw the attention of children and

adolescents to embrace Islamic teachings. This role should be taken up by millennial preachers in addressing the needs and preferences of today's younger generation, including Generation Z.

The Concept and Role of Zakat in Islamic Social Finance

Zakat is a fundamental pillar of Islam and serves as a vital instrument in Islamic social finance. It obligates Muslims to allocate a specific portion of their wealth to eligible recipients, primarily to reduce poverty and promote social justice. Zakat is not merely an act of personal charity but a systematic mechanism for wealth redistribution and socio-economic development within the Muslim community (Shaikh, 2022). Within the broader framework of Islamic social finance, zakat operates alongside waqf (endowment) and *sadaqah* (voluntary charity), forming a comprehensive system to address economic inequality. Its obligatory nature ensures the circulation of wealth, benefiting the underprivileged and fostering social solidarity and economic stability (Kamarudin et al., 2021). Proper collection and distribution of zakat can offer sustainable support for essential sectors such as education, healthcare, and entrepreneurship, contributing to long-term empowerment rather than temporary aid.

Furthermore, zakat plays a critical role in supporting broader development goals in line with global initiatives like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has been recognised as an effective tool in addressing poverty (SDG 1), promoting quality education (SDG 4), and reducing inequalities (SDG 10) (Bakkar et al., 2022). However, the effectiveness of zakat as a social finance mechanism depends on the efficiency and transparency of zakat institutions. Challenges such as weak governance, lack of public trust, and outdated management systems can limit its potential. To improve zakat's impact, scholars have emphasised the need for digital platforms and financial technologies (fintech) to enhance zakat management. Digitalisation can streamline the processes of zakat collection and distribution, increase transparency, and expand reach to underserved communities (Azman et al., 2023). Therefore, strengthening zakat institutions through digital innovation and effective governance is crucial to maximise zakat's role in wealth redistribution, social protection, and poverty alleviation.

Digital Dakwah: Contemporary Strategies and Impact

Digital *dakwah* has become a crucial method for disseminating Islamic teachings in the modern era, especially as digital technology shapes how people communicate and learn. Unlike traditional *dakwah*, which depends on face-to-face interactions, sermons, and printed materials, digital *dakwah* makes use of online platforms such as social media, websites, mobile apps, podcasts, and video-sharing services to reach wider and more diverse audiences (Ibrahim et al., 2023). This shift is particularly effective in engaging younger generations, who are more familiar with and drawn to digital content. Among the contemporary strategies in digital *dakwah* is the creative use of multimedia content, including short videos, reels, infographics, animations, and podcasts, which simplify complex religious teachings into engaging and accessible formats (Zakaria et al., 2023). Interactive content, such as live streaming, webinars, and Q&A sessions on platforms like Instagram Live, Facebook, and TikTok, promotes two-way communication between preachers and audiences, fostering dialogue and deeper understanding (Abdullah & Shafeeq, 2022). Collaboration with Muslim influencers, educators, and content creators is another effective strategy to broaden the reach of *dakwah* messages, making them more relatable, especially to youth and urban communities.

The impact of digital *dakwah* is far-reaching, as it expands the dissemination of Islamic teachings beyond geographical and cultural boundaries and supports ongoing religious learning. It enables Muslims from different backgrounds to access authentic Islamic knowledge anytime and anywhere while fostering a sense of global Muslim solidarity. Nevertheless, digital *dakwah* also faces challenges, including the spread of unauthenticated content, misinterpretation of religious messages, and the lack of digital literacy and ethics among some *da'i* (Salleh et al., 2023). To address these issues, it is essential to equip preachers with proper digital competencies, including media literacy, content creation skills, and effective online engagement techniques to ensure that digital *dakwah* remains credible and impactful. By embracing creative and interactive methods and overcoming existing challenges, digital *dakwah* holds great potential to revitalise Islamic preaching in contemporary society.

Open Courseware (OCW) and Digital Education in Islamic Studies

Open Courseware (OCW) and digital education have become transformative tools in Islamic studies, making religious education more accessible, flexible, and engaging. The development of open educational resources (OER), including OCW, enables the dissemination of high-quality Islamic knowledge to a global audience without financial barriers. In today's digital era, online learning platforms provide structured Islamic courses, scholarly lectures, and interactive materials that reach learners beyond traditional classrooms (Azmi et al., 2023). As more individuals seek knowledge through the internet, OCW has the potential to democratise access to authentic religious education and bridge gaps for those in remote or underserved areas. One of the main advantages of OCW is its ability to present Islamic knowledge in various formats, such as video lectures, e-books, articles, quizzes, and discussion forums. These interactive and multimedia approaches enhance learners' understanding and retention of complex religious concepts (Fauzi et al., 2022). Moreover, digital education supports self-paced learning, allowing students to engage with content based on their time and capacity. This flexibility is especially valuable for working adults and youths managing multiple responsibilities.

Despite these benefits, the expansion of digital education in Islamic studies also faces important challenges. Ensuring the authenticity and accuracy of online content, the lack of standardisation in course materials, and the limited availability of qualified instructors for digital platforms are significant issues that require careful attention (Hassan & Rahman, 2023). Technical barriers, including limited internet access in certain regions, may also hinder participation. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration between scholars, educational institutions, and technology experts to ensure that OCW materials are credible, accessible, and user-friendly. In conclusion, open courseware and digital education present significant opportunities to advance Islamic studies by making religious education more inclusive and adaptable to contemporary learning needs. Strategic development, supported by strong quality assurance, is essential to maximise their role in spreading authentic Islamic teachings.

Integrating Zakat Education with Digital Platforms: Opportunities and Challenges

Integrating zakat education with digital platforms offers a significant opportunity to enhance public awareness, understanding, and management of zakat in contemporary society. As one of the key pillars of Islam and an essential instrument for socio-economic justice, zakat

requires proper education on its principles, calculations, and distribution mechanisms. Digital platforms, including websites, mobile apps, e-learning portals, and social media, provide innovative and accessible means to deliver zakat education in more interactive and user-friendly formats (Ismail et al., 2023). These technologies support real-time communication, personalised learning, and multimedia content such as videos, infographics, and simulations, helping to simplify complex zakat calculations and distribution guidelines. Additionally, mobile applications and digital portals can assist Muslims in calculating zakat accurately and connecting directly with trusted zakat institutions (Azman et al., 2023). This digital integration also enables wider outreach, especially among younger generations and Muslims living in non-Muslim majority countries where formal zakat education may be limited.

Nevertheless, despite these opportunities, digital zakat education faces several challenges. Ensuring the credibility and authenticity of online zakat content is critical, as misinformation or inaccurate calculations may mislead users and undermine the religious obligation (Hassan & Rahman, 2023). Furthermore, the absence of standardised educational frameworks on some platforms can lead to inconsistencies in the presentation of zakat principles. The digital divide remains a pressing issue, as limited internet access in rural or underprivileged areas may restrict participation in digital learning initiatives (Salleh et al., 2022). Another concern is the lack of digital skills among preachers and zakat educators, which affects their ability to utilise these tools effectively. Therefore, while digital platforms hold great promise for advancing zakat education, overcoming these challenges requires collaboration between zakat institutions, scholars, and technology experts to ensure the development of credible, standardised, and user-friendly educational resources tailored to the needs of modern Muslim communities.

In conclusion, the integration of digital tools and platforms is crucial for the contemporary practice of Islam, particularly in the areas of *dakwah* and zakat education. Preachers must be equipped with comprehensive digital competencies to engage effectively with diverse audiences, especially younger generations, through creative, interactive, and credible content. Likewise, zakat, as a fundamental pillar of Islamic social finance, requires transparent, efficient, and standardised digital management to optimise its role in poverty alleviation and the promotion of social justice. Furthermore, the development of Open Courseware and digital education has significantly broadened access to authentic Islamic knowledge, offering flexible and inclusive learning opportunities. Nevertheless, challenges such as ensuring content authenticity, improving governance, and addressing gaps in digital literacy remain critical. Therefore, advancing digital strategies in *dakwah*, zakat management, and Islamic education is essential to ensure that Islamic teachings and obligations are conveyed effectively, ethically, and relevantly within the context of the digital era.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the role of Open Courseware (OCW) in enhancing zakat education through digital *dakwah*. The approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the perspectives, practices, and challenges faced by contemporary *da'i* and zakat educators in utilising digital platforms.

Data will be gathered from existing literature, case studies, and reports on Islamic education, digital media, and zakat management, including research on digital *dakwah* and zakat

education practices. Purposive sampling will be used to select relevant sources that provide insights into the effectiveness of OCW in zakat education and the digital competencies required for effective engagement. Thematic analysis will be employed to interpret the data. Sources will be reviewed to identify recurring patterns and themes that address the research questions. Triangulation will be applied by comparing findings across different sources to enhance the credibility of the results. Ethical considerations will include proper citation of sources and ensuring transparency in data usage throughout the research process.

This methodology aims to generate insights that inform the development of effective, engaging, and credible OCW platforms for zakat education within the context of digital *dakwah*.

Findings & Discussion

The Necessity of Digital Competencies for Effective and Credible Digital Dakwah

The advancement of digital *dakwah* as a primary medium for disseminating Islamic teachings underscores the critical need for preachers to possess strong digital competencies. The effectiveness of digital *dakwah* hinges not only on delivering religious content but also on the ability of preachers (*da'i*) to engage audiences through creative, accurate, and interactive communication. Digital platforms require *da'i* to be proficient in media literacy, content creation, and the use of various technological tools to maintain the credibility and relevance of their messages. Furthermore, as digital audiences increasingly expect interactive and dialogical engagement, preachers are required to adopt more dynamic roles, including moderating discussions and responding to public inquiries in real time. Thus, equipping *da'i* with comprehensive digital skills is essential to ensure that Islamic teachings are presented effectively, ethically, and in line with contemporary communication standards.

The Integration of Zakat with Digital Platforms: Strengthening Islamic Social Finance through Innovation and Governance

Zakat, as a fundamental mechanism of wealth redistribution and social justice in Islamic social finance, has gained renewed relevance through its integration with digital platforms. The utilisation of digital tools such as mobile applications, online portals, and e-learning platforms has facilitated broader access to zakat-related knowledge and services, enabling more efficient calculation, payment, and management processes. This digital transformation has the potential to enhance zakat's role in addressing socio-economic inequalities and improving the well-being of underprivileged communities. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of digital zakat initiatives is contingent upon the credibility, transparency, and governance of zakat institutions. The absence of standardised educational frameworks and quality control mechanisms in some digital platforms raises concerns about misinformation and inconsistency in zakat practices. Therefore, while digitalisation offers significant opportunities for expanding zakat's impact, robust institutional frameworks and standardisation are crucial to ensure public trust and the integrity of zakat as an instrument of Islamic social finance.

Open Courseware and Digital Education in Islamic Studies: Expanding Access while Ensuring Authenticity and Quality

The development of Open Courseware (OCW) and digital education platforms has significantly transformed access to Islamic studies, making high-quality religious education available to a global audience. These platforms offer flexible, self-paced learning

opportunities through various multimedia formats, including video lectures, interactive modules, and online discussions, thereby accommodating diverse learning preferences and needs. OCW holds particular potential for reaching individuals in remote or underserved areas where access to formal Islamic education may be limited. However, despite its transformative potential, the expansion of digital education in Islamic studies presents challenges related to content authenticity, standardisation, and accessibility. The lack of qualified instructors for digital content, the absence of standardised curricula, and issues of internet connectivity in certain regions may undermine the effectiveness and reliability of online Islamic education. Hence, ensuring the credibility, consistency, and accessibility of OCW requires concerted efforts from scholars, educational institutions, and technology experts to uphold the integrity of Islamic knowledge in the digital sphere.

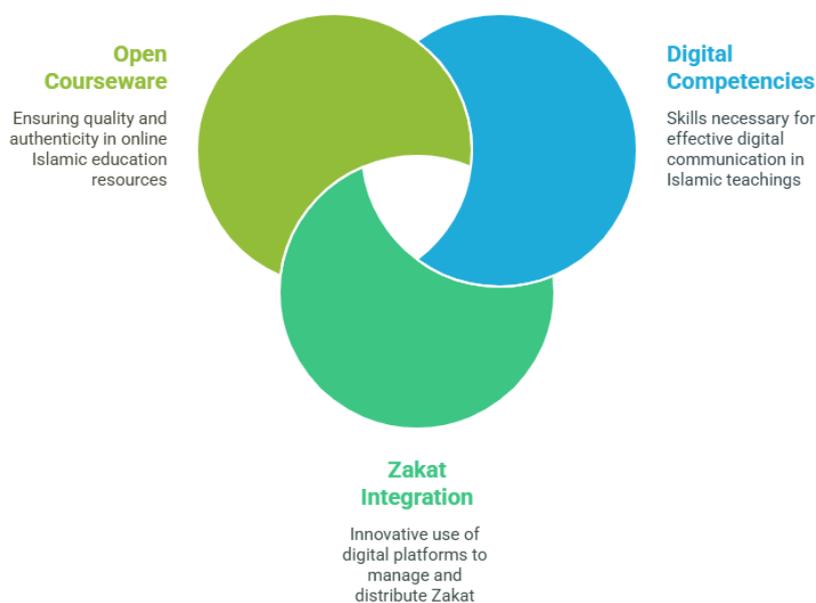


Figure 1.0: Enhancing Digital Islamic Practices

Source: Authors' Analysis

Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of digital platforms into Islamic practices, particularly in the areas of *dakwah* and zakat education, is no longer optional but essential. The rapid advancement of technology has transformed the landscape of religious engagement, demanding that preachers (*da'i*) acquire strong digital competencies to deliver credible, interactive, and creative content suited to contemporary audiences, especially younger generations. Digital *dakwah*, when executed effectively, not only broadens the reach of Islamic teachings beyond geographical boundaries but also fosters meaningful two-way communication between preachers and audiences. Likewise, the digitalisation of zakat management through mobile applications and online portals enhances transparency, efficiency, and public trust, thereby strengthening zakat's role as a critical instrument of Islamic social finance. However, both *dakwah* and zakat management face significant challenges, including issues of content authenticity, governance, and digital literacy. Addressing these challenges requires systematic efforts to equip preachers and zakat administrators with the necessary skills, supported by robust institutional frameworks that safeguard the integrity of Islamic teachings in the digital space.

Furthermore, Open Courseware and digital education platforms have expanded access to Islamic knowledge, enabling inclusive and flexible learning opportunities that transcend traditional classroom boundaries. The potential of OCW lies in its ability to democratise religious education and make high-quality, authentic content available to a broader audience. Nevertheless, concerns about the standardisation and authenticity of digital content, as well as limitations in infrastructure and instructor capacity, must be addressed to ensure the credibility and effectiveness of these educational tools. Initiatives such as Zakat Open Courseware (ZOC) illustrate how digital platforms can be leveraged to provide structured, interactive, and context-sensitive zakat education, fostering greater understanding and compliance among Muslims. Ultimately, the effective integration of digital tools in *dakwah*, zakat, and Islamic education requires collaborative efforts among policymakers, educators, scholars, and technology experts to ensure that Islamic teachings are conveyed with integrity, adapted to contemporary needs, and accessible to all segments of society.

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