



Influence of *Pesantren Da'wah* in the Digital Space: An Examination of the Peaceful *Da'wah* by Lora Ismael Al-Kholili

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Abstract

Religious moderation is one of the key philosophies underpinning Indonesian society's lives. However, with the advancement of technology, many seeds of propaganda and intolerant preaching in the name of religion have emerged on social media. This phenomenon potentially threatens Indonesians' understanding of religious moderation. Currently, there are not many influencers, particularly from the pesantren community, who dare to promote moderate Islam on social media. This research aims to examine the methods and role of Ismael al-Kholilie in spreading peaceful da'wah on Instagram. This study employs a qualitative method with descriptive analysis. The findings presented an analytical description of the content, combined with discourse analysis theory on social media related to Lora Ismael's da'wah activities. This research study uses Alvin L. Bertran's role theory. The results of this research reveal that with the peaceful da'wah methods applied by Lora Ismael al-Kholilie, he has made a significant contribution to nurturing the understanding of moderation in Indonesian society. By packaging da'wah concepts and methods into a narrative, the messages Lora Ismael wishes to convey become more impactful and captivating to readers, making them more readily accepted.

Keywords: Digital Media; Influencers; Peaceful Da'wah; Pesantren.

Abstrak

Moderasi beragama merupakan salah satu falsafah penting yang menjadi poros kehidupan masyarakat Indonesia. Akan tetapi dengan seiring perkembangan teknologi, kini ditemukan banyak benih propaganda dan dakwah intoleran yang mengatasnamakan agama di sosial media. Fenomena ini berpotensi mengancam paham moderasi beragama masyarakat Indonesia. Sedangkan saat ini, tidak banyak influencer, khususnya dari kalangan pesantren yang berani terjun untuk mendakwahkan moderasi Islam di sosial media. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji metode dan peran Ismael al-Kholilie dalam menebar dakwah damai di media sosial Instagram. Penelitian ini menerapkan metode kualitatif dengan analisis deskriptif. Hasil penelitian akan disajikan dalam bentuk deskripsi analitis terhadap konten-konten yang dikombinasikan dengan teori analisis wacana di media sosial terkait aktivitas dakwah Lora Ismael. Analisis penelitian ini menggunakan teori peran dari Alvin L. Bertran. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkapkan, dengan metode dakwah damai yang diterapkan oleh Lora Ismael al-Kholilie, ia mempunyai kontribusi penting dalam penyediaan paham moderasi bagi masyarakat Indonesia. Dengan konsep dan metode dakwah yang dikemas dalam sebuah cerita membuat pesan-pesan dakwah yang ingin disampaikan Lora Ismael begitu mengena dan membius siapa saja yang membacanya, sehingga lebih mudah diterima oleh pembacanya.

Kata Kunci: Dakwah Damai; Digital; Influencers, Pesantren.

Introduction

Rahmah li al-'alamin is a term closely associated with Islamic teachings. However, the rapid advancement of technology and the times has significantly impacted society's lives, affecting children, youth, and older people. The current generation, particularly the youth, tends to spend more time in the virtual world than in the real world. Especially after the

COVID-19 pandemic, the role of social media has profoundly and massively altered behavior across various groups worldwide, particularly in Indonesia.¹

The evolution of social media platforms initially meant only for communication and entertainment, has now transformed into a medium that can negatively impact society. Nowadays, social media is rife with propaganda and intolerant preaching in the name of religion, causing significant harm to many people.² Educated individuals may resist such propaganda, but many still fall prey to these intolerant ideologies. According to the Freedom of Religion and Belief (KBB) Coordinator of Komnas HAM, cases of intolerance in Indonesia have risen significantly since 2016.³

This phenomenon calls for the involvement and contributions of religious figures and scholars to engage with social media, providing a counter-narrative to the prevalent intolerant propaganda. Fundamentally, social media can also serve as a medium for da'wah (Islamic preaching). In this era, social media is the most objective tool for conveying thoughts, ideas, and influence to the public, making it an essential element in the totality of da'wah.⁴ According to Islamic teachings, carrying on the legacy of da'wah is imperative. Da'wah is highly encouraged by Islamic law, classified as *fardhu kifayah* (a communal obligation) for those capable of performing it.⁵ However, its application is not absolute for everyone; it is tailored to individual abilities and capacities. Every Muslim has an equal opportunity to spread positive da'wah, especially in today's digital era, where one can disseminate goodness with a single click.

Therefore, we need many individuals to engage in social media da'wah to combat intolerant propaganda. Among the prominent preachers gaining a significant following on Instagram is Lora Ismael al-Kholilie, a preacher and great-grandson of one of NU's founders, Syaikhona Kholil Bangkalan. He often shares religious messages through his Instagram posts, usually crafted into engaging stories. His da'wah messages cover various themes, including practical daily fiqh, contemporary societal issues, and messages related to religious moderation, as often discussed by Islamic organizations or the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

This research distinguishes itself from previous studies. For instance, Deni Puji Utomo's study titled "Representasi Moderasi Beragama dalam Dakwah Habib Husein Ja'far Al-Hadar pada Konten Podcast *Noice Berbeda Tapi Bersama*" focuses on how Habib Husein Ja'far al-Hadar represents religious moderation. Similarly, Ali Mursyid Azisi et al.'s research, "Moderasi Beragama di Ruang Digital: Studi Peran Habib Husein Ja'far dalam Menebar Paham Moderat di Kanal Youtube," examines Habib Husein Ja'far's role and contribution in spreading moderate ideologies on YouTube. Azmi Fadhilah's "Analisis Isi Pesan Dakwah yang Terkandung dalam Akun Instagram @Shiftmedia.Id" analyzes the da'wah messages on the

¹ Theguh Saumantri, "Perilaku Bermedia Sosial Di Era Pandemi Covid 19," *EDUEKSOS: Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial Dan Ekonomi* 11, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.24235/edueksos.v11i1>.

² Nur Mufidatul and Yoga Irama, "Dakwah Islam Rahmat Li Al-'alamin Husein Ja'Far," *Jurnal Ilmu Agama: Mengkaji Doktrin, Pemikiran, Da Fenomena Agama* 22, no. 2 (2021): 129–51.

³ Reiza Praselanova, "Komunikasi Resolusi Intoleransi Beragama Di Media Sosial," *Wasilatuna: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* 3, no. 1 (2021): 76–95, <https://doi.org/10.38073/wasilatuna.v3i1.360>.

⁴ Hamzah Ya'qub, "Teknik Berdakwah Dalam Leadership" (Bandung: CV Diponegoro, 1981).

⁵ Abdullah bin Alawy Al-Haddad, "Al-Da'wah Al-Tammah Wa Al-Tadzkiyah Al-'Ammah" 1 (2000): 48–48.

@shiftmedia Instagram account. A. Hannan's study, "Cyberspace dan Populisme Islam di Kalangan Netizen: Studi Kasus Pada Akun Media Sosial Felix Siauw," analyzes Felix Siauw's social media account.

These studies do not address the role and contribution of purely *pesantren*-based influencers engaged in social media da'wah, specifically on Instagram. Hence, this research differs from previous studies regarding the object and medium used. This study delves into the methods, roles, and contributions of Lora Ismael al-Kholili in promoting moderate da'wah on Instagram. While Habib Husein primarily uses YouTube, a predominantly audio-visual platform, Lora Ismael focuses more on written content on Instagram.

This research is crucial as it analyzes the methods, roles, and contributions of Lora Ismael in promoting peaceful da'wah on Instagram, potentially becoming a knowledge source and reference for developing moderate religious da'wah in the digital world. It also serves as evidence of the significant contributions of *pesantren* communities, often viewed as traditionalists, in digital da'wah.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive analysis method. The findings will be presented as a descriptive analysis of Lora Ismael's content and discourse analysis theory related to his da'wah activities on social media. The analysis uses Alvin L. Bertrand's role theory, which posits that a person's role can stem from individuals with certain social statuses and positions within society.⁶

Saryono & Anggraeni define qualitative research as a type of research used to explain the characteristics or quality of social influences that cannot be described or explained using quantitative methods.⁷ One key characteristic is the dynamic nature of the research object, which can develop and change over time.⁸

To strengthen and corroborate the data, the researcher uses library research to support the grand theory and research data. The literature data focuses on discussions about contributions, da'wah methods, religious moderation, and supporting data on Lora Ismael's da'wah. Primary data is sourced from the Instagram account @ismaelalkholilie, focusing on content related to religious moderation. The research is enriched with other literature sources, including reports, books, websites, and journals.

The results of this study are expected to serve as a knowledge source and role model for *pesantren* da'wah on social media, contributing to the discourse on social media da'wah, especially for students, academics, researchers, religious figures, intellectuals, and the general public.

⁶ Soeleman B Taneko, *Sosiologi Menyelami Fenomena Di Masyarakat* (Bandung: Setia Purna Inves, 1986).

⁷ Saryono and Mekar Dewi Anggraeni, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif Dan Kuantitatif Dalam Bidang Kesehatan* (Yogyakarta: Nuha Medika, 2013).

⁸ Sugiyono, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif Dan Kuantitatif Dalam Bidang Kesehatan* (Bandung: Alfa Beta, 2019).

Result and Discussion

Biography of Lora Ismael al-Kholili

Ismael Amin Al Kholilie, commonly known as Lora Ismael, was born on November 17, 1992, in Bangkalan. He was born and raised in the *pesantren* environment under his father's guidance at PP. al-Falah as-Salafi al-Kholili. He is a great-grandson of Syaikhona Kholil Bangkalan. Tracing his lineage, he is Ismael bin KH. Amin Kholil. The title "Lora," attached to Lora Ismael, is a term for Gus or the son of a kyai in the Madurese language.⁹

Lora Ismael began studying religious sciences at a young age under his father's supervision. He continued his education at *Pesantren* Darul Falah Jepara under KH. Taufiqul Hakim. This *pesantren* is known for its method of reading the yellow book (*kitab kuning*) *Amtsilati*. Shortly afterward, he pursued his studies at *Pesantren* Al-Anwar, Sarang, Rembang, under KH. Maimoen Zubair. After graduating from *Pesantren* Al-Anwar Rembang, he furthered his education at Darul Musthafa Tarim, Yemen, where Habib Umar bin Hafidz directly taught him.¹⁰

Lora Ismael has been actively involved in da'wah on social media for quite some time. According to his account, he began his social media da'wah in 2011, using Facebook to share wise words, short quotes, and translations from Arabic to Indonesian.¹¹ Over time, Lora Ismael's social media presence grew, especially after continuing his studies in Tarim, Hadramaut. Even though he could only access his phone once a week, his content on Facebook and Instagram about his experiences in Tarim attracted many followers. Currently, Lora Ismael (@Ismaelalkholili) has 370,000 followers on Instagram¹² and 104,000 followers on his Facebook account,¹³ Muhammad Ismael Al-Kholilie. With such a large following, Lora Ismael uses these platforms as extensive fields for his da'wah.

In addition to his social media presence, he is also known as the author of several books compiling his Instagram writings. Among these are "Catatan dari Tarim," "Catatan Lora Ismael al-Kholilie," and "Kompas Kehidupan." Besides his written works, he is also recognized as an alumnus of *pesantren* who has become an intellectual or observer of Islamic sciences. He is known as a successful young *pesantren* preacher who effectively uses social media for da'wah.

Lora Ismael al-Kholilie's Da'wah Methods on Instagram

One of the objectives of da'wah is to invite or encourage others through various means so that the teachings of Islam, as revealed by Allah to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), can be understood, accepted, and practiced by society, thereby guiding them

⁹ Soeleiman Fadeli and Mohammad Subhan, *Antologi NU; Sejarah, Istilah, Amaliyah, Usuah* (Surabaya: Khalista, 2007).

¹⁰ Rifky Aritama, "Ismael Al Kholilie: Gus Baha-nya Madura," 2020, accessed on August 5, 2023, <https://ibtimes.id/ismael-al-kholilie-gus-baha-nya-madura/>

¹¹ Personal interview, Ismael Amin al-Kholili, at Pesantren Langitan Tuban, December 29, 2022.

¹² Instagram Account "@ismaelalkholilie", (Accessed on August 5, 2023), <https://instagram.com/ismaelalkholilie?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==>

¹³ Instagram Account "Muhammad Ismael al-Kholilie", (Accessed on August 5, 2023), <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100012374796014&mibextid=ZbWKwL>

towards eternal happiness in the hereafter. Linguistically, the term "da'wah method" is composed of two words: "meta" (through) and "bodos" (path, way). The root word "methodica" means the doctrine of methods in German. In Arabic, the method is referred to as "thariqah" or "thariq," which means path or way. These terms are synonymous with another word, "al-Ushlub."¹⁴

From this etymology, we can conclude that a da'wah method is a way or means to achieve a specific goal, in this case, to bring people closer to Allah, the Creator. Fundamentally, da'wah has scriptural legitimacy in the Quran, specifically in Surah An-Nahl, verse 125:

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ ۚ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided." (Quran 16:125)

Based on the verse above, da'wah methods can be classified into three. *First, the Da'wah bil Hikmah* (Da'wah with Wisdom). This method involves conveying the message of Islam wisely and prudently, adhering to the guidance and wisdom of the religion.¹⁵ In delivering this da'wah, the sources used must be credible and accountable. *Da'wah bil Hikmah* requires maturity of soul and clarity of thought, as the *da'i* (caller to Islam) must strive to understand the socio-cultural context and background of the audience.¹⁶

Second, the Al-Mau'idzab al-Hasanah (Giving Good Advice). This method entails giving advice and admonition gently and constructively, aiming to touch the recipients' hearts. It starkly contrasts approaches involving violence or hate speech, as its foundation lies in using good language. This method can take various forms, including sermons, lectures, counseling sessions, speeches, and more contemporary formats like religious talk shows or podcasts focusing on advice and Islamic knowledge.

Three, Mujadalah billati Hiya Absan (Arguing in a Better Way). This method involves engaging in dialogue and discussion to address mistakes or misconceptions made by the audience. When a mistake is made, whether in speech or behavior, the *da'i* responds with gentle and respectful discourse, emphasizing the importance of wise dialogue, respect for the interlocutor, and grounding the discussion in knowledge. This method is effective and relevant for spreading Islamic teachings in diverse communities.

Among these methods, Lora Ismael al-Kholilie predominantly utilizes the method of *Al-Mau'idzab al-Hasanah*, as inferred from Surah An-Nahl verse 125. In his Instagram posts, he often shares personal experiences with scholars or others, laden with values and messages. Although he may occasionally employ the method of *Al-Mujadalah*, his predominant approach in each Instagram post is with *Al-Mau'idzab al-Hasanah*. Several advantages contribute to the

¹⁴ Aliyudin Aliyudin, "Prinsip-Prinsip Metode Dakwah Menurut Al-Quran," *Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal for Homiletic Studies* 5, no. 16 (2020): 181–96, <https://doi.org/10.15575/idajhs.v5i16.360>.

¹⁵ Fahrurrozi, Faizah, and Kadri, *Ilmu Dakwah* (Mataram: Prenada Media Grup, 2019).

¹⁶ Ilyas Ismail and Prio Hotman, *Filsafat Dakwah Rekayasa Membangun Agama Dan Peradaban Islam* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2011).

effectiveness of Lora Ismael's da'wah strategy, including his ability to utilize all his social media accounts effectively as tools for conveying messages. Additionally, Lora Ismael's popularity as a favored student of KH. Maimoen Zubair and Habib Umar bin Hafidz from Yemen have significantly boosted the traffic on his social media accounts, particularly Instagram, attracting a wide audience. In the following sections, we will dissect and analyze some strengths of his content, which serve as pillars in conveying his peaceful da'wah on social media:

1. Strong Knowledge Base

One of the fundamental and indispensable requirements for a preacher is profound knowledge and exceptional scholarly capabilities. This requirement is non-negotiable given a preacher's immense responsibility, especially when their medium of preaching is social media, which is highly susceptible to misunderstandings. According to Sheikh Muhammad Ali al-Shabuni, guiding people to treat worldly matters, which he likens to a drop of water, to achieve eternal happiness in the hereafter, which he likens to the sea, requires adequate competence. It is due to the preacher's great responsibility, both among the community and before Allah SWT.¹⁷

In this regard, Lora Ismael has no issues with his foundational and scholarly base. From a young age, he was educated in a *pesantren* environment and later tutored by internationally renowned scholars such as KH. Maimoen Zubair and Habib Umar al-Hafidz Yaman. He was known as an intelligent and diligent student during his time in the *pesantren*. Currently, he leads the PP. Al-Muhajirun *pesantren* in Geger Bangkalan, Madura, and mentors hundreds of students from various regions in Indonesia.

2. Branding as a Student of Two World-Class Scholars

It cannot be denied that, nowadays, to assess a person's prominence, the public often looks at the figures behind them. If figures of great integrity and repute back them, the person's name and integrity are automatically elevated. The same applies to Lora Ismael; although his scholarly capabilities are already formidable, his name is further elevated because he studied directly under two great scholars: KH. Maimoen Zubair and Habib Umar bin Hafidz Yaman. Both scholars indirectly provide additional strength to Lora Ismael's every step in his preaching journey. He frequently writes about these two teachers as a form of legitimation for his preaching and to provide examples and values to his followers. There are five pieces of content about Habib Umar and two about KH. Maimoen Zubair.

Habib Umar himself is an internationally renowned scholar with a significant influence. Besides being a scholar who teaches at his *pesantren*, Darul Musthafa, he is also active in preaching worldwide. According to the book "The 500 Most Influential Muslims" by John et al. (2019), he is even mentioned as one of the most influential people in the world. Starting in 2009, he was in the 36th position; by 2019, he had risen to the 8th position.¹⁸ Meanwhile, KH. Maimoen Zubair is one of the pivotal scholars in Indonesia. He was a reference for scholars in his time, with extraordinary charisma. Even at the end of his life, he

¹⁷ Muhammad Ali Al-Shabuni, *Al-Nabi Wa Al-Nubunwah* (Maktabah al-Ghazali, 1985), 125.

¹⁸ Wan Suhailah Wan Abdul Jalil and Abu Dardaa Mohamad, "Manhaj Dakwah Habib Umar Bin Hafidz," *Al-Hikmah* 11, no. 01 (2019): 143–59.

received the honor of being buried in the *Ma'la* cemetery in Makkah al-Mukarramah, a rare privilege for a common scholar.¹⁹

3. Analysis and Research

In commencing his preaching on social media, Lora Ismael did not come empty-handed. He always conducts thorough personal research and analysis. He does not confine himself to one media channel. He consistently observes the developments and trends. According to him, before deciding to preach on social media, he uses two simple research parameters: understanding the community's needs and the context of the existing realities. Using these two research approaches, Lora Ismael tends to be adaptive to every change on social media.²⁰

Lora Ismael's preaching remains relevant to these two research parameters. His strength in analysis and research is evident in two aspects. First, in his preaching media, he carefully observes the market and opportunities for preaching. For instance, before he became serious about preaching on Instagram, he initially wrote on the Facebook platform. As he mentioned in a personal Facebook status, he started being active on Facebook in 2011, where he was active in a group called Pis-Ktb. This group discussed religious jurisprudence issues concerning various societal problems.²¹ He noted that the trend at that time was that people were actively using Facebook.

After the era of Facebook began to wane, with the youth, in particular, transitioning to Instagram, Lora Ismael also caught on to this trend. He then decided to migrate and expand his preaching to Instagram. It proved to be a successful move, as he received a warm reception from his followers.

Secondly, in terms of content, armed with his research, his content is very current and solution-oriented. When creating preaching content, he often addresses topics that are being widely discussed. In this era, preaching is not merely about preparing sermon texts or speaking from the pulpit. The challenges of preaching today are far more complex and require meticulous planning. Preaching must be active, progressive, and innovative. Preachers must generate new ideas that are more grounded and beneficial for the community. Preaching should not be a burden on society or cause division among them. Packaged in a more humane and dialogical manner, preaching should meet the needs and capabilities of the community.²²

It is because the challenges of preaching today differ from those in the past. Scholars and religious leaders had a significant influence on society's lives. His congregants followed, listened to, and their beliefs were practiced. People's love for scholars and their desire to receive guidance that could help them live a good and righteous life drove them to make sacrifices and travel long distances for religious gatherings. However, the reality today is different. People prefer to access various forms of knowledge through their gadgets. Thus, the role and innovation of preachers on social media are indispensable.

¹⁹ Jamal Ma'mur Asmani, *KH. Maimoen Zubair: Sang Maha Guru* (Yogyakarta: DIVA Press, 2021), 10.

²⁰ Ismael Amin al-Kholili, wawancara, Pesantren Langitan Tuban, tanggal 29 Desember 2022.

²¹ Postingan Facebook "Ismael Amin al-Kholili" <https://www.facebook.com/100012374796014/videos/542526097204853> (Accessed on Mei 5, 2023)

²² Abdul Basit, "Dakwah Cerdas Di Era Modern" 03, no. 01 (2013): 2088–6314.

4. Communicative Skills

In the study of preaching, one of the fundamental aspects a preacher must possess is the ability to communicate effectively and correctly. Without proper communication, preaching is unlikely to yield the desired results. Quraish Shihab touched on this topic in his commentary. When discussing Prophet Ibrahim's preaching to his father, he noted that Prophet Ibrahim never explicitly referred to idols as his father's deities. Instead, he described the characteristics of the idols. Prophet Ibrahim advised his father gently, without making him feel foolish for worshipping something deaf and blind. Instead, he chose a manner of preaching that was polite, communicative, friendly, gentle, and rational.²³

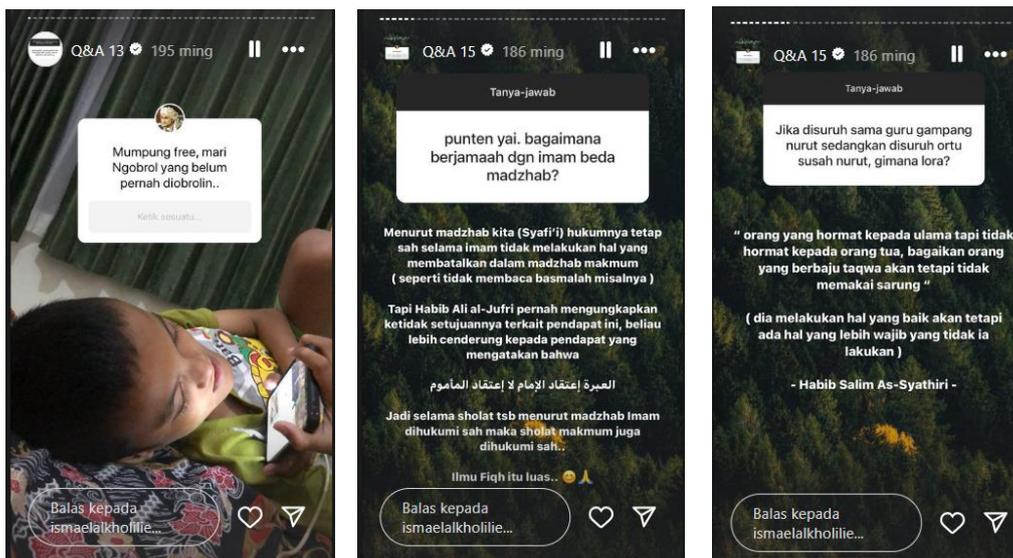


Image 1: Example of Lora Ismael's communication style in stories

In this regard, one of Lora Ismael's strengths lies in using the story feature on Instagram. He frequently conducts question-and-answer sessions on various issues, ranging from fiqh to life matters. Everyone can easily submit questions without any selection or curation. People can pour out all their concerns and anxieties to Lora Ismael. He then answers these questions in a scholarly and communicative manner. The responses to various questions from netizens can still be viewed in the highlights section of his Instagram account.²⁴

5. Conveying Moderate Views Through Stories

One of Instagram's advantages as a social media platform is its widespread use. Instagram is the third most-used social media platform in Indonesia. According to a Hootsuite (We Are Social) survey, 85 million people, or 86.6 percent of the population, use Instagram.²⁵ With such a large user base, Instagram provides a significant preaching niche. This motivated Lora Ismael to preach on Instagram, where he has his unique approach to content creation.

²³ Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbab* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2005). 196.

²⁴ Sorotan Instagram story @ismaelalkholilie, (Accessed on August 6, 2023), https://www.instagram.com/s/aGlnaGxpZ2h0OjE3OTMzNDM0NjY2NjEwNzk2?story_media_id=24732079_95737925603_10394892223&igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

²⁵ Saudah Saudah, Ana Mariani, and Putri Agna Amalia, "Digital Storytelling Home of Humans Di Instagram," *Jurnal Komunikasi Global* 11, no. 1 (2022): 164–86, <https://doi.org/10.24815/jkg.v11i1.25044>, 164.

He often uses digital storytelling to convey his messages. Digital storytelling is a strategy to foster enthusiasm and interest in lifelong learning. It aims to create a lasting impression on learners by incorporating emotional elements to enhance memory and curiosity.²⁶

In this context, Lora Ismael frequently writes simple yet meaningful stories. Many of his followers eagerly await his stories. Additionally, human hearts are naturally drawn to stories. As we know, 80 percent of the Quran's content is narrative. Hence, it is not surprising that the storytelling content promoted by Lora Ismael receives significant attention from his followers.

Lora Ismael's Peaceful Preaching from a Religious Moderation Perspective

Preaching that promotes tranquility and peace is closely related to the concept of religious moderation. A person with a moderate understanding of religion will never incite radical actions. Religious moderation is essentially a middle path in religious experience. All religious adherents should embrace this moderate religious understanding.²⁷ Establishing Islam as a mercy for all creation (*rahmatan lil'alamin*) is crucial because religious moderation allows one to balance one's understanding of the Quran and Hadith with reason.²⁸ Religious moderation is essential in a pluralistic society to ensure harmonious religious coexistence. Indicators for measuring religious moderation include national insight, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture.

In this modern era, moderate preachers must participate in social media preaching because extremist and intolerant ideologies have taken deep root in social media, impacting the environment. Young people seeking religious knowledge prefer social media content in textual, visual, or audio-visual formats, which can easily influence them with incorrect religious views. Based on the above discussion, a concrete example of efforts to popularize and preach peaceful, polite, and moderate Islam is what several preachers or influencers from the millennial *pesantren* community are doing. Among these millennial preachers is Lora Ismael al-Kholilie, through his Instagram content, both posts and stories. These contents are highly appropriate and effective in promoting peaceful and moderate preaching on social media platforms. The messages and values conveyed align with the indicators of religious moderation, including:²⁹

1. Commitment to the Nation

Tracing his lineage, Lora Ismael inherits the spirit of independence from his grandfather. His grandfather, Syaikhona Muhammad Kholil Bangkalan, was a significant figure behind the founding of the Nahdlatul Ulama organization. Syaikhona Kholil also mentored

²⁶ Mochammad Fardianto Nurdin and Agus Suprijono, "Pengaruh Media Instagram Berbasis Storytelling Terhadap Kemampuan Literasi Sejarah Siswa Kelas XI IPS SMA Negeri 1 Tarik," *AVATARA, e-Journal Pendidikan Sejarah* 12, no. 4 (2022): 1–11.

²⁷ Agus Akhmadi, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Keragaman Indonesia," *Jurnal Diklat Keagamaan* 13 (2019): 45–55.

²⁸ Dinar Bela Ayu Naj'ma and Syamsul Bakri, "Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama Dalam Penguatan Wawasan" 5, no. 2 (2021).

²⁹ Ni Wayan Apriani and Ni Komang Aryani, *Moderasi Beragama, Kalangwan Jurnal Pendidikan Agama, Bahasa Dan Sastra*, vol. 12, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.25078/kalangwan.v12i1.737>.

prominent pioneers of Indonesian independence, such as KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, the founder of *Pondok Pesantren Tebuireng*, Jombang, and KH. Wahab Hasbullah, Tambakberas, Jombang.³⁰

"Therefore, there is fundamentally no reason for him not to be committed to the Republic of Indonesia. It is often reflected in several of his Instagram content. He frequently writes and encourages people to love their homeland. One such post was a video of Habib Ali Zainal Abidin at the PBNU Building, where he captioned:

"Anyone who thinks that defending the country contradicts defending religion does not understand what religion and the state are. Habib Ali often reminds us to love and defend the country and maintain the homeland's security. Habib Ali stood in full respect when the Indonesian national anthem was played. He even raised his fist when we sang the song "*Hubbul Wathon*" by KH. Abdul Wahhab Hasbullah"³¹

Through this post, Lora Ismael encourages people to foster a sense of nationalism. Every Indonesian citizen must have this national insight because they must commit to the nation and state as citizens with religious freedom. By having strong national commitment and insight, they are essentially fighting for the ideals of the nation's founders.³²

2. Tolerance

Lora Ismael frequently posts content with themes of tolerance. Although not explicitly stated, the values and essence can be discerned. For example, he shared a story about his meeting with Rais Aam PBNU, KH. Miftakhul Akhyar, in Surabaya. In this meeting, KH. Miftakhul Akhyar discussed a decision from the 2019 PBNU National Conference regarding the status of non-Muslims in Indonesia, which sparked controversy.³³ Lora Ismael wrote about KH. Miftakhul Akhyar's perspective, which reflects PBNU's tolerant stance:

"The Munas decision states: Non-Muslims in Indonesia remain non-Muslims, but which category do they fall into? Harbi, Dzimmi, *Musta'man*, or *Mu'abad*? After discussion, it was concluded that the non-Muslims in Indonesia do not fit into these categories, so we simply call them Muwathin (citizens). In terms of *aqidah* and *fiqh*, they are still non-Muslims, but this classification is only in terms of *Mu'amalah*. We must understand *Fiqhul da'wah* and use language that attracts others to Islam."³⁴

This stance by PBNU, affirmed by Lora Ismael in his writings, further confirms that Lora Ismael's preaching on Instagram consistently upholds principles of tolerance.

³⁰ Muhammad Kholil dan Syafrawi, "Ulama Fenominal Dan Berkharismatik, Syaikhona Kholil Bangkalan," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran Keislaman* 7, no. 2 (2020): 243–55.

³¹ Reels @Ismaelkholilie, diakses, (Accessed on August 5, 2023) <https://www.instagram.com/reel/Chtw4copY0k/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==>

³² Deni Puji Utomo and Rachmat Adiwijaya, "Representasi Moderasi Beragama Dalam Dakwah Habib Husein Ja'far Al-Hadar Pada Konten Podcast Noice 'Berbeda Tapi Bersama,'" *Pusaka* 10, no. 1 (2022): 212–23, <https://doi.org/10.31969/pusaka.v10i1.675>.

³³ See more, Muhammad Faeshol Muzammil, Accessed on August 7, 2023, <https://islam.nu.or.id/bahtsul-masail/tahqiqul-manath-keputusan-bahtsul-masail-munas-nu-2019-tentang-status-non-muslim-di-indonesia-bagian-1-GdmLS>

³⁴ Reels @Ismaelkholilie, diakses, (Accessed on August 5, 2023) <https://www.instagram.com/p/B7V49UTpsxX/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA%3D%3D>

3. Anti-Violence

In all of Lora Ismael's posts, there is no trace of verbal violence. His content is always crafted with the courteous language typical of *pesantren*. Even arguments are always prioritized when criticizing something. Additionally, he frequently exemplifies commendable behavior in daily life. None of his writings are destructive or harmful. Instead, many of his posts feature stories that highlight gentle and kind behavior. For instance, he once wrote about the preaching journey of his teacher, Habib Umar bin Hafidz. He portrayed Habib Umar as a person of gentle nature, quoting a figure who spoke about Habib Umar's demeanor:

"Since childhood, he has often faced life's hardships. His father was kidnapped and killed when he was nine years old. He has been slandered, insulted, belittled, and falsely accused by Wahhabi and other groups. Despite this, I have never heard him defend himself or retaliate. I have never heard any harsh words, insults, or curses from him."³⁵

According to Lora Ismael, gentleness and compassion in preaching are essential qualities for a preacher. He uses his teacher as an example to ensure the message reaches the hearts of his Instagram followers.

4. Accommodative to Local Culture

Lora Ismael is also a scholar and intellectual who highly accommodates local culture. It is evident from his flexible approach to various issues, including traditional music, celebrating the Prophet's birthday, and other local Islamic traditions. On one occasion, he wrote about the debate on the legality of using a wooden drum (*kentongan*) to signal prayer times between KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Muhammad Faqih Maskumambang.³⁶ It clearly shows Lora Ismael's accommodative stance towards local culture, as taught by the NU scholars. His Instagram followers are diverse, not just from the *santri* community. When invited to offline events, he adjusts to the situation. For instance, he does not wear a robe and turban when addressing university students. It is different when he preaches in a *pesantren* setting, where he embraces his scholarly identity.

The Contribution of Lora Ismael in Promoting Religious Moderation

The creative content shared through Lora Ismael's Instagram posts has significantly impacted young people. With a gentle, flexible approach and simple language, his content easily resonates with the youth. As a result, the movement to promote religious moderation is well-received by many and can be understood as an intelligent principle of religion (contextual, not merely textual). This impact is evidenced by the statistics from his Instagram account @ismaelalkholilie, where each post typically receives an average of 21,583 interactions, 21,320 likes, and 263 comments per post.³⁷

Lora Ismael al-Kholili's role aligns well with the theory popularized by Alvin L. Bertrand, which posits that roles can stem from an individual's social status or position. In this

³⁵ Reels @Ismaelalkholilie, diakses, (Accessed on August 5, 2023) <https://www.instagram.com/p/B7V49UTpsxX/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA%3D%3D>

³⁶ Instagram @ismaelalkholili, diakses, (Accessed on August 7, 2023), <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1061423534280130&set=a.109245989497894>

³⁷ Admin Analisa.io, diakses, (7 Agustus 2023), <https://analisa.io/profile/ismaelalkholilie#>

context, Lora Ismael, a preacher, and great-grandson of the prominent NU figure Syaikhona Kholil Bangkalan, embodies Bertrand's statements:

1. Enacted Role: This is a role performed earnestly by an individual, especially if it is their duty. Lora Ismael performs his role as a preacher with dedication, which is evident in his active engagement and content creation on social media.
2. Prescribed Role: This refers to the contributions society expects from someone considered necessary. Society expects Lora Ismael to contribute significantly to spreading religious moderation, and he fulfills this expectation through his influential social media presence.
3. Role Model: This is an individual's behavior that others emulate and follow. Lora Ismael's demeanor and approach in preaching serve as an example for others to follow, particularly in promoting a moderate and tolerant understanding of Islam.
4. Role Set: This is an individual's personal relationship with others or society while performing their role. Lora Ismael's interaction with his followers, reflected in the high engagement on his posts, showcases his effective personal connection with the community.

Lora Ismael's content significantly impacts young people, making complex religious principles more accessible and relatable to them. He effectively promotes a contextual and moderate understanding of Islam by leveraging social media. His posts foster a sense of tolerance and understanding among his followers, contributing to a more harmonious society. With significant interactions on his posts, Lora Ismael's influence extends widely, allowing his moderate message to reach a broad audience. His approachability and responsiveness to followers' questions create a strong personal connection, enhancing the impact of his preaching. Lora Ismael al-Kholilie's effective use of social media for preaching promotes religious moderation and serves as a model for other preachers to engage with contemporary audiences. His role in fostering a tolerant and understanding community is vital in today's diverse and interconnected world.

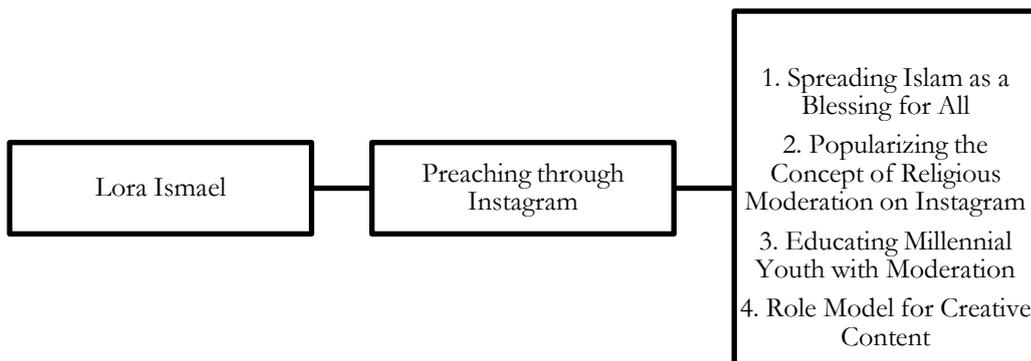


Image 2: *Lora Ismael's Role in the Digital Preaching*

Therefore, Lora Ismael's contribution to advocating peaceful preaching and religious moderation in the digital space has garnered significant attention from various circles. By using language that is easily understood and relevant to millennials, especially the youth, he has

made discussions about religious moderation more appealing. It aligns with Alvin L. Bertran's role theory, which states that significant roles in solving societal problems are expected to come from influential figures. Lora Ismael al-Kholilie, with his considerable position and status, effectively meets these expectations.

Conclusion

Lora Ismael's role in promoting peaceful preaching on the social media platform Instagram has garnered extraordinary attention from various segments of society, particularly among the youth who consider Instagram a primary medium for interaction. The concept and method of preaching packaged within stories make Lora Ismael's messages profoundly impactful and captivating for readers. The content carrying messages of religious moderation is effectively communicated, engaging followers as if conversing and storytelling, subtly integrating the preaching content.

As Alvin L. Bertran has noted, Lora Ismael holds a particular status within society due to his lineage as a descendant of a prominent scholar and his renown as a preacher. This status serves as a tangible example for the younger generation or millennial preachers to emulate Lora Ismael's approach to preaching. The success of Lora Ismael's preaching on Instagram can also serve as a strong motivation and exemplary model for preachers from *pesantren* backgrounds, encouraging them to embrace and confidently utilize social media for preaching.

Given the ease of technology, everyone now has an equal opportunity to play a role in spreading preaching and positive values anywhere. Consequently, the ultimate goal of Islamic preaching, which is to establish an Islamic order that embodies the concept of Islam as a blessing for the universe (*rahmatan lil alamin*), can gradually be realized.

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