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Theological Perils of Liberalism In Indonesian Islamic Dawah: A Historical and Strategic Analysis

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Abstract

Liberalism is a concept that emphasizes the importance of individual freedom to grow and develop without constraints imposed by ideology, society, culture, religion, or politics. Within the context of Islam, liberalism is frequently perceived as a challenge to religious principles, beliefs, and acts of worship. The emergence of liberalism as a philosophical discourse that infiltrates religious thought represents a significant external challenge today. This article serves as a literature review examining liberalism as a hurdle for da'wah in the era of globalization, employing qualitative methods and literature analysis. An examination of various sources indicates that, in this globalized age, access to information is becoming increasingly unrestricted and readily available. In this advancing era, liberal ideology is influencing all demographics, including the Muslim community. The interpretation and understanding of freedom of expression have led to numerous deviations, among the repercussions of liberalism. This presents a unique challenge for da'wah in the digital age, which can be addressed through the effective use of mass media. For instance, preachers need to leverage mass media as a platform for da'wah. In this context, these individuals must grasp the diverse media landscape that characterizes the current digital era.

Keywords: *Theological Perils; Liberalism of Indonesian; Islamic Dawah.*

A. Introduction

Liberalism is an understanding of the freedom of an individual to develop without being limited in thought, society, culture, religion, press, and politics. Freedom for liberals must also be considered, especially the impact that occurs. More specifically, liberalism also has a big impact on the social system, especially Western society, including setting aside the rights of God and every power that comes from God, which results in the large-scale transfer of religious aspects in social life from the public sphere to mere ceremonial and ritual matters individually and considered private. (Batubara et al., 2021) Several observations and discussions by scholars agree that liberalism can hurt Islam, such as undermining sharia values and triggering conflict between different groups. Adherents of liberal understanding also argue that liberalism tends to encourage society to prioritize individual interests over collective interests. Some experts argue that liberalism in Islam is not fully by religious principles. They highlight that the notion of liberty and human rights within liberalism stands in opposition to the principles of submission and compliance found in Islam. Therefore, they argue that liberalism in Islam must be studied and understood contextually and must not conflict with basic Islamic values. (Elhasbi et al., 2023)

The seeds of liberalization among Muslims emerged in the name of the modernization movement of Islamic thought which was carried out openly by modernists which had started in 1967. Young people who are busy responding to Islamic modernization include; Harun Nasution, Nurcholish Madjid, Gusdur, Ahmad Wahib, Djohan Efendi, Dawam Rahardjo, Kuntowijoyo and several of his friends who became the forerunners of Indonesian Islamic liberalism. Furthermore, several younger figures continue the relay of modernity and have become liberal Muslims, namely Budi Munawar Rachman, Zuhaeri Misrawi, Ulil Absar Abdalla, and their friends. They actively carry out liberalization, rationalization, secularization, and thought in Islam, both in the form of individual discourse and institutions or institutions. The goal is simply to try to change the condition of the religious life of the Indonesian Muslim community before dividing the Muslim community, by way of rationalizing knowledge in various aspects. The movement for the understanding of liberal Islam in Indonesia has seriously stolen the attention of so many scholars and researchers of Islamic thought in Indonesia, including William Lidle, Robert Hefner, J. Furnifal, Donal Emerson, Herbert Feith, and Riaza Hasan who are often influenced by Islamic studies socio-political Islam including the development of Islamic thought. (Abdullah, 2016; Alak, 2015)

In the Islamic context, liberalism is often seen as a threat to religious values, including the values of aqedah and worship. Therefore, most Muslim scholars reject liberalism because it is considered contrary to Islamic values, especially in terms of morality and ethics. (Zamzam Elhasbi et al., 2023) The world cannot avoid modernity and globalization. Muslims are part of the contemporary age, characterized by the rise of intricate modern challenges. The liberal Islamic perspective on addressing these issues is regarded as a reform movement within Islam. This liberal faction advocates for total freedom and insists on individual rights, allowing for maximum self-expression in light of current advancements. This encompasses liberties related to thought, opinion, and religious practices, including the principles of Islam. So, to adapt to the conditions of the times, several Islamic reform movements emerged that carried rationality and were by the issues of modernity. (Djamaluddin et al., 2020) Therefore, an absolute solution is needed that is capable of improving the state of mad'u understanding so that it does not dissolve in the "misguided" understanding of liberalism in Indonesia. In terms of implications In the realm of da'wah, contemporary challenges extend beyond mere renewal and issues within the economic, political, social, and cultural spheres. There are also significant challenges posed by various deviant ideologies that are equally pressing today. The problems arising in the economic, political, social, cultural, and religious domains often stem from underlying thoughts and beliefs. A particularly pressing intellectual challenge we face today pertains to religious thought. The most fundamental issues, which have been acknowledged for an extended period, are internal challenges characterised by stagnation, fanaticism, blind faith, superstition, bid'ah, and cursing, among others. On the other hand, the external challenges currently confronting us include the infiltration of diverse discourses related to religious thought, such as liberalism. (Yusof et al., 2022) These diverse challenges are both significant and worthy of thorough discussion. In light of the issues outlined, this article will examine national da'wah under the heading "Theological Threats of Liberalism in Indonesian Islamic Dawah: A Historical and Strategic Evaluation."

B. Method

This study adopts a mixed-method approach that integrates historical analysis and strategic evaluation to explore how liberalism influences the theology and practice of Islamic da'wah in Indonesia. The historical analysis aims to trace the evolution of liberal thought and its interaction with Islamic preaching traditions.



Liberalism's emphasis on individual freedom and pluralism has gradually influenced segments of Indonesian Islamic intellectual discourse, notably through reformist thinkers who emphasized contextual and rational interpretations of Islam (Aripudin and Junaedi, 2024).

The strategic evaluation aspect focuses on identifying and assessing da'wah strategies employed by Indonesian Islamic organizations and preachers in responding to liberal interpretations. Using qualitative methods, data were collected from scholarly works, organizational reports, and da'wah activities across traditional and digital platforms. This research applies a literature review and content analysis approach to examine how da'wah messages incorporate or reject liberal values such as pluralism, tolerance, and rationalism in preaching practice (Madnasir, Mu'in and Kholid, 2021).

Case studies of institutions such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and independent da'wah movements are used to understand the diversity of theological approaches within the liberal-conservative spectrum. The analysis also includes contemporary forms of da'wah that combine traditional Islamic messages with modern digital outreach, as found among urban Muslim communities (Setiawati et al., 2022).

To ensure validity, the study triangulates multiple data sources: historical records, journal articles, and digital da'wah practices. The research evaluates these materials using interpretive thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of recurring themes related to liberal influences in Islamic discourse. Moreover, the study incorporates a comparative dimension, referencing regional experiences such as Malaysia and Turkey to understand the contextual uniqueness of Indonesia's da'wah strategies.

The methodology also draws upon the evolving da'wah framework of intellectuals and organizations that promote moderation and inclusivity. Recent works emphasize the importance of promoting da'wah approaches grounded in tolerance and interreligious dialogue to counter both extremism and excessive liberalization (Mukhtidinov, 2023).

The study also incorporates recent insights on effective da'wah communication, emphasizing the use of technology and media engagement to maintain theological relevance among younger audiences. According to studies, the mastery of digital media and narrative-based communication is crucial in promoting da'wah that resonates with contemporary society (Tahir, 2023).

Lastly, the research utilizes strategic evaluation techniques to formulate recommendations for da'wah practitioners and policymakers. These include

enhancing theological literacy, fostering intercultural dialogue, and integrating moderate Islamic perspectives into educational and digital frameworks. Through this integrative methodology, the study not only examines the historical trajectory of liberalism but also provides practical, evidence-based strategies to strengthen the theological integrity and societal relevance of da'wah in Indonesia (Harahap and Setiawan, 2022).

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

a) Analysis Of Results

The main finding of this research demonstrates that liberalism, with a focus on individualism and pluralism in interpreting religion, has posed significant challenges to traditional approaches in preaching that emphasize uniformity and adherence to more orthodox interpretations of religion. The following is a detailed explanation of some case examples that illuminate the theological challenges faced in the context of preaching in the nation that holds the title for the highest Muslim majority globally.

First, the increasing tendency towards liberalism among young scholars in Indonesia is one of the major challenges. A study conducted by researchers at the State Islamic University (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta found that many students of Islamic studies show a more open attitude towards liberal interpretations in religious issues, such as gender equality and religious tolerance. This is reflected in their acceptance of the thoughts and books of liberal figures such as Nurcholish Madjid and Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im who support a more progressive understanding of Shariah and human rights.

Second, the emergence of communities and organizations that support liberal Islamic thinking, such as the Salihara Community and the Liberal Islam Network (JIL), indicates a shift in the paradigm of preaching in Indonesia. For example, JIL is active in organizing discussions and seminars that explore topics such as religious pluralism, democracy, and the relationship between religion and state. These activities often provoke reactions from conservative Islamic groups who see this as a threat to their understanding of what is considered true religion. (Daniels, 2007)

Third, conflicts and debates have occurred between liberal and conservative groups within large Islamic entities like Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). On several occasions, leaders of both organizations have issued statements



indicating sharp differences of opinion on how Islam should be interpreted and practiced in Indonesia. For example, the debate on whether Muslims are allowed to say Merry Christmas to Christians has sparked heated discussions about the boundaries of religious tolerance.(Barton, 2014)

Fourth, adapting the message of Islamic preaching to respond to contemporary issues is also an important example of the influence of liberalism. Preachers like Kyai Haji Mustofa Bisri (Gus Mus) have used their platforms to voice support for diversity and inclusivity, often citing sacred texts to emphasize that Islam is a religion that supports peaceful coexistence and harmonious relations between various religious and ethnic groups.(Irsad et al., 2024)

b) Comparative Analysis

To understand the impact and challenges of liberalism on Islamic preaching in Indonesia, it is important to examine how other countries with significant Muslim populations face similar challenges. Through this comparative analysis, we can gain a broader perspective and understand strategies that may be effective or less effective in the Indonesian context.

In Malaysia, the liberalism movement within Islam has also sparked intense debate. As in Indonesia, some groups support liberal thoughts in Islam, known as the "Islamic Renaissance Front," which advocates for freedom of religion and thought. (Olivier, 2016) The Malaysian government, through its Islamic Religious Council, has actively fought against the influence of liberalism by declaring several organizations and individuals as deviant. This comparison shows that the government's response to liberalism can vary significantly depending on the country's political structure and religious history.(Chinyong Liow, 2007)

Turkey presents another example of a country with a different approach to liberalism in Islam. The Turkish government under the AKP (Justice and Development Party) has taken steps to modernize Islamic views by promoting a more inclusive version of Islam that is tolerant of pluralism.(Babacan et al., 2021) Turkey has adopted a more open approach to liberalism compared to the more conservative policies observed in Arab countries.(Karaveli, 2010)

From this comparison, we can see that the response to liberalism is highly dependent on the socio-political context of each country. In Indonesia, the challenges posed by liberalism in preaching could be addressed by adopting strategies that combine strong religious education with interfaith and intercultural dialogue to reduce misunderstandings. Drawing lessons from Malaysia and Turkey, Indonesia may need to seek a balance between upholding traditional values and

acknowledging the need for a more flexible understanding of Islam in the era of globalization.

2. Discussion

a) Liberalism

The term "liberal" is taken from the word *liber* in language which means free and not a slave or can be interpreted as a condition in which a person is free from the possession of another person. In the Oxford English Dictionary, liberal or liberal means free, progressive, reformist, or radical. (Rahmat, 2016) Meanwhile, in the Big Indonesian Dictionary, liberal means free and has a broad and open outlook. (Untara et al., 2014, p. h.300)

The term liberal refers more to a type of action than the term liberalism refers to a philosophy, belief, or even a stance. The word liberal in Malay, in the Reference Center for Malay Literature and the Language and Library Council (DBP), the word liberal refers to freedom and democratic government, market freedom space in the economic field, freedom or openness in science and technology, and so on. Meanwhile, liberalism refers to a form of understanding or attitude that requires democracy and freedom in economic activity. However, the term 'liberal' refers to actions that must be performed by actors. While 'liberalism' is a philosophy in the form of understanding, ideology, principles, or even beliefs that can affect individuals or groups of people. (Kamil et al., 2022) Free thinking means thinking freely and openly, tolerant, broad-minded, and not stagnant (not fixated on schools of thought). In addition, liberalism can also the concept can be described as a framework of ideas that encompasses nearly all facets of human existence, including social, cultural, political, educational, economic, and religious dimensions. (Ismail & Stapa, 2019) In another opinion, a liberal is one of the foreign terms taken from English and French. Liberalism comes from the word *liberty* in English and *liberte* in French which means free. In this sense liberalism is a teaching about freedom, which is an understanding that developed in the West and has different assumptions, theories, and views on life. (Nasir, 2022)

According to Fahmi Hidayatullah, liberalism can be defined as an idea born of socio-political theory with an emphasis on freedom, equality, and human rights for the sake of progress. According to them, these three keywords must be obtained by every human being as a citizen. Liberalism is also synonymous with the term independent because it is not in a colonized condition. (Hidayatullah, 2019) Elhasbi argues that liberalism is a political ideology that emphasizes individual freedom,



freedom of thought, and freedom of expression. The term liberalization, on the other hand, refers to the process of liberating markets and trade that promotes the adoption of an open and free economy. Meanwhile, a liberal is a person who holds the values and principles of liberalism as the basis for his outlook on life. (Zamzam Elhasbi et al., 2023) In contrast, Sheikh Sulaiman al-Khirasyi liberalism is a philosophy that emphasizes the importance of individual liberty, advocating for the necessity of respecting personal autonomy. It posits that the primary role of government is to uphold and safeguard the freedoms of individuals, which encompass freedom of thought, expression, private property, and personal liberties, among others. (Zamzam Elhasbi et al., 2023)

From the various arguments of experts who have defined liberalism, it can be concluded that liberalism is an ideology or understanding that prioritizes freedom of rights regarding individual freedom in all aspects of social, cultural, political, economic, educational to religious. In addition, Liberalism perceives the duty to honor personal liberty and asserts that the primary role of government is to uphold and safeguard the freedoms of individuals, including the freedom of thought, expression, private property, and personal autonomy, among others.

Liberalism has three main things, namely life, freedom, and the right to own property. From these three things, other characteristics develop including: a) Freedom and absolute equality in interpreting life. Man is the absolute creator and determiner of everything that appears to act as a god. This characteristic is the continuation of the ideology of secularism which separates humans from God. b) Accept other people's opinions fairly. c) Government with the consent of the people. d) Enforce laws and regulations. e) The state is only a tool or instrument. f) Liberalism does not accept the teachings of dogmatism (religion), because of the philosophical views of John Locke (1632-1704) which states that all knowledge is based on experience, and truth is relative. (Khalid et al., 2022)

b) History of liberalism

The history of liberalism begins with the Renaissance, as a reaction to the hegemony of the feudal lords in medieval Europe. At that time the power of the church dominated all aspects of human life. All the rules of life are regulated and under the autonomy of the church. As a result, humans do not have freedom of action, individual rights are limited and even abolished. This condition triggers opposition from various groups, who want the right to freedom from every individual in every action and life choice. According to the view of liberalism, the individual is the creator as well as the determinant of his actions. With a concept

like this, a person's success and failure are determined by himself, by his actions, and by the choices for these actions. In essence, humans have freedom in their lives, humans are autonomous individuals. (Batubara et al., 2021)

Furthermore, the development of liberalism in the 20th century after the end of the First World War in 1918, several European countries applied the principles of democratic government. It is marked by the start of giving rights to women to simply express their opinions and aspirations in government. By the 1930s, liberalism began to develop in other aspects of life, not only covering political freedom, but also freedoms in other fields; for example, economic, social, and so forth. Furthermore, in 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt The four freedoms were articulated, which include the freedom of speech and expression, the freedom of religion, the freedom from want, and the freedom from fear. Ultimately, in 1948, the United Nations released the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which set forth various economic and social rights alongside political rights. (Thalib, 2016)

The development of liberalism in Indonesia began with the emergence of liberal Islam in Indonesia which then began to show its existence since the 1970s, almost simultaneously with the strengthening of the Islamic revivalist position. The discourse on the development of liberal Islam began to be popularized by one of its main figures, namely Nurcholish Madjid. Even though Nurcholish himself never mentioned and used the term "liberal Islam" for his ideas and understanding that he wrote and expressed. However, if one takes a closer look at the implications of his writings which were put forward in the 1970s, Nurcholish can be considered a pioneer of liberal Islam. (Nasir, 2022)

Liberalism in Islam can be seen as a movement that carries the values of freedom, equality, and human rights. This movement began to develop in the 19th century and continued into the 20th century among Muslim scholars who were inspired by Western liberal understanding. The development of liberalism in Islam began when the reform movement (tajdid) emerged in the Islamic world in the 19th century. This movement seeks to revive the true spirit of Islam, by reinterpreting Islamic religious teachings to make them more relevant to the context of the times. One of the main figures in the movement was Muhammad Abduh, an Egyptian scientist known for his liberal thinking. Muhammad Abduh criticized conservative thinking which the advancement of science and technology within the Islamic world has faced limitations. The initial stance was that Islam should advocate for the growth of these fields. Moreover, it was posited that Islam ought to uphold human rights and individual liberties. The ideas of Abduh were later echoed by numerous



other Islamic scholars, including Rashid Rida, Ali Abd al-Raziq, and Muhammad Iqbal. They highlighted the necessity of interpreting Islamic teachings about varying historical contexts. Additionally, some of these scholars endorsed the promotion of democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression among Muslims. Nevertheless, the rise of liberalism within Islam, particularly in Indonesia, has encountered criticism from conservative factions. These critics contend that Western liberal ideologies are at odds with Islamic principles and that advancements in science and technology should always be paired with moral and spiritual growth. Despite this, the evolution of liberalism in Islam persists to this day. Several Muslim nations, including Turkey and Indonesia, have adopted democratic frameworks and demonstrated a commitment to human rights within their social and governmental structures. Conversely, in numerous other countries, the liberal movement continues to grapple with a range of challenges and barriers.

limited the development of science and technology in the Islamic world. He began by expressing the opinion that Islam must support the development of science and technology. Furthermore, he also argues that Islam must also respect human rights and individual freedoms. Abduh's thoughts were later followed by many other Islamic scholars such as Rashid Rida, Ali Abd al-Raziq, and Muhammad Iqbal. They emphasized the importance of understanding Islamic teachings in the context of different times. Furthermore, some of them also support the development of democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression among Muslims. However, the development of liberalism in Islam, especially in Indonesia, has also drawn criticism from conservative circles. They argue that Western liberal thought is contrary to Islamic values and that progress in science and technology must always be accompanied by progress in moral and spiritual development. But in fact, the development of liberalism in Islam has continued to this day. Several Muslim countries such as Turkey and Indonesia have introduced a democratic system and respect for human rights in social culture and government. Meanwhile, in several other countries, the liberal movement continues to face various challenges and obstacles.(Elhasbi et al., 2023)

c) Liberalization Objects

In the process of spreading this understanding to make Islamic religious teachings the target of liberalization, liberal ideology is typically disseminated across three key domains: 1) The liberalization of belief systems, which encompasses the promotion of religious pluralism. From the perspective of belief, liberalism is grounded in interfaith jurisprudence and posits that all religions share a common

objective, having been conveyed by prophets through similar anthropological and sociological frameworks; 2) The liberalization of Sharia by reformulating the method of *ijtihad*. According to liberal Islamic factions, liberalism in the realm of Sharia is essential, advocating for a revised *ijtihad* approach to foster a new understanding that embraces inclusivity; and 3) The liberalization of the concept of revelation through the deconstruction of Qur'anic verses. At this juncture, liberal Islamic groups persist in deconstructing the verses of the Qur'an with the primary aim of elucidating how these verses can be applied in daily life, employing interpretations of the Qur'an that resonate with their contemporary thought processes. (Thalib, 2016)

d) The Influence of Liberalism on Life

Liberalism has had a lot of influence on the lives of Indonesian people, especially Muslims. One of the effects of liberalism is the relativity of values. In this understanding, each individual has the right to determine values that are considered right and wrong as well as good and bad, according to their respective perspectives and personal experiences. This can lead to a decrease in respect for values that have been recognized and accepted by Muslims. Furthermore, the perspective of liberalism can also create a separate threat to the values of social justice in Muslims. The concept of social justice in Islam is based on the principles of equality and justice. But in the view of liberalism, individual rights take precedence over social interests. This can lead to the creation of wider social inequality within Muslims and society in general. (Elhasbi et al., 2023)

Adam Smith, in his book *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), revealed that liberalism developed in the economic field thanks to the *laissez-faire* policy of an economist who came from Scotland. Idea economy Adam Smith Then made base for building a system economy capitalist Which liberalizes activity economy for all. Policy This Finally limits mixed hand country in activity economy people. (Sunaryo & Fahmi, 2024) Liberalism is an ideology that emphasizes individual freedom and encourages the development of progress in the social field, through social thought and action. Therefore, freedom is considered capable of instilling a sense of optimism and a sense of responsibility towards enlightenment for the social life of society. Through their logic, each individual is seen as able to build social awareness, including giving birth to education that has a universal and moderate paradigm. (Fauzi, 2018)



In the world of education, the curriculum is one of the targets of liberalism intervention as a guideline for shaping students' thinking and behavior products. The curriculum in the fields of aqidah, the concept of revelation, and Islamic sharia were systematically liberalized. The liberalization of Islamic aqeedah has the aim of destroying Islamic aqeedah and strengthening the understanding of religious pluralism which considers all religions to be true. Liberalization of the concept of revelation is intended to challenge the authenticity (authenticity) of the Al-Quran, the Ottoman Manuscripts, and as-Sunnah. The liberalization of Islamic sharia aims to destroy Islamic laws and eliminate the belief of Muslims in Islamic sharia as a solution to all problems in human life.(Hosnan, 2018) One of them, the Liberal Islam Network (JIL), has been voicing freedom of thought and the importance of re-interpreting Islamic teachings. JIL itself interprets Islamic teachings on various grounds. First, opening the door of ijihad in all aspects of Islam. Second, prioritizing the religious spirit which is not only in the aspect of text literacy. Third, believe in the truth that is relative, open, and plural. Fourth, believe in the right to freedom of religion and belief.(Rachman, 2010, p. h.33-35)

The word da'wah comes from Arabic, namely da'a-yad'u-da'watan, which means to invite, call, summon, invite, beg, entertain.(Syahputra, 2019) Da'wah is a religious phenomenon that is a normative ideal as well as a social phenomenon that is rational, actual, and empirical as Sunnatullah.(Djamaluddin et al., 2020) HSM. Nasaruddin Latif in his book Theory and Practice of Da'wah Islamiyah defines Da'wah Islamiyah as an oral and written activity that calls for, invites and calls on other human beings to believe and obey Allah SWT, by the lines of aqidah and shari'a and Islamic morality. (Waton, 2023) Furthermore, the definition of da'wah put forward by Syekh Ali Mahfudz namely, da'wah is an encouragement or suggestion to what is good (which is known) and prevents what is wrong for the happiness of the world and the hereafter. (Nasihin & Zen, 2023)

Toha Yahya Umar posits that da'wah involves guiding individuals thoughtfully towards the correct path as outlined by divine instructions, aimed at promoting their welfare and joy both in this life and the next. Meanwhile, Toha Yahya Umar argues that da'wah is inviting people in a wise way to the right path according to God's commands, for their benefit and happiness in this world and the hereafter. Toha Yahya Umar, *Da'wah Science*, Cet. IV (Jakarta: Widjaya, 1985). Based on the opinions of several experts that have been mentioned, the definition of da'wah can be taken as an effort that is realized in various activities in the form of invitations to humans to lead in the right, positive, and better direction than before by Allah's commands.

e) Liberalism As A Da'wah Challenge Today

Liberal Islam is a new ideology designed by Western orientalist through Muslims. One of the goals is to destroy the foundation of monotheism in the Islamic creed, which gradually turns into religious pluralism. At first, liberalism began to emerge and develop in Europe to liberate humanity from human oppression. However, later developed into an understanding that gives the widest possible freedom to humans in all aspects of life, including aspects of their religion, to lie to their religious teachings.(Fadillah, n.d.) Apart from that, liberal Muslims also reject the formal implementation of Islamic law, which is regulated by state law. For that purpose, they try various reasons; sometimes, the rejection is made on cultural grounds by saying that Islamic law does not reflect the values and culture of today's society.(Djamaluddin et al., 2020)

In mid-2001, the name Liberal Islam began to be widely known among Indonesian people. Soon the name became a topic of conversation among the people, especially Muslims in Indonesia, who at that time had not yet been hit by various calamities. With its beautiful and captivating motto, "Islam that Liberates", this group then carried the flag "Liberal Islamic Network" which is abbreviated as JIL. This group succeeded in attracting attention from various groups, both the pros and cons. (Dinia et al., 2015) Liberalism is mentioned in many verses of the Koran, the majority of which refer to polytheists. They do not realize that there will be Allah's punishment that will befall them, nor do they feel as if they are safe from His punishment, even though they are people who make things up. Buya Hamka expressed his opinion that "People who help spread understanding in society which can lead to a decline in the sense of struggle, a sense of jihad upholding Islamic ideals, are not only pioneers in bringing infidels, they are even among the traitors." who brought the name of Islam to the destruction of the power of Islam.(Aprilyani et al., 2023)

Da'wah is the activity characterized by the issuance of invitations, whether spoken, written, or through behavior, which is conducted intentionally and with careful planning to sway others, either as individuals or in groups. The aim is to foster an understanding, attitude, appreciation, and experience related to Islamic religious teachings as conveyed through messages delivered without any form of coercion. In this case, da'wah can be interpreted as an appeal, invitation, and call. It can also be interpreted as inviting, calling, calling verbally, with behavior, or with real actions. Therefore, a real solution is needed that can improve the condition of mad'u understanding so that it does not dissolve into "misguided" understandings,



especially the understanding of liberalism in Indonesia. The current challenges facing da'wah extend beyond mere economic, political, social, and cultural issues; they also encompass significant difficulties in the realm of thought. In truth, many of the problems arising from these various sectors are rooted in ideological perspectives. Among the most pressing challenges today are those related to religious thought. The most critical internal challenges that have been acknowledged for some time include stagnation, fanaticism, blind adherence, superstition, heresy, and various forms of irrational beliefs. On the other hand, the external challenges being encountered involve the infiltration of diverse religious discourses, including liberalism, secularism, relativism, and religious pluralism. The concept of understanding, which originated in the West, has evolved into a significant ideological framework within religious contexts. Recently, the MUI issued a fatwa prohibiting religious pluralism, alongside secularism and liberalism. The fatwa has sparked a wave of pros and cons with their respective arguments. These thoughts are a challenge of da'wah in itself. (Djamaluddin et al., 2020)

f) Liberalism In The Digital Age

In the era of globalization, everything has moved to digital, making all information more open and easier to obtain. The era of globalization makes a country can relate to other countries more easily. This has led to changes in thinking and behavior for many people. However, not all of these changes lead to positive things, but many changes lead to negative things. One example is the many new ideologies that enter Indonesia. An ideology is a summary of basic ideas that are collected and integrated without being contradictory or contradictory in its aspects. In essence, it is in the form of an order of values, where values can be formulated as the good and bad things of something, which in this case is what one aspires to. In this increasingly advanced era, the ideology of liberalism is busy attacking teenagers. One result of this phenomenon of liberalism is promiscuity which is widespread and increasingly crowded among teenagers. (surajiyo, 2020)

g) Da'wah In The Digital Era

The challenge of preaching in the digital era can be faced by utilizing mass media. (Briandana et al., 2020) If preachers wish to utilize mass media as a platform for their da'wah, they must also comprehend and influence the policies governing the press, radio, and television. This presents a significant challenge, particularly in a democratic nation where media operates with a level of independence and autonomy, making it difficult for external parties to exert control. The task of

enhancing the role of preachers who can effectively harness media advancements is a challenge that impacts the viability of da'wah itself. To effectively navigate and select appropriate media for da'wah, especially in democratic contexts, preachers need to engage in reciprocal relationships with mass media, particularly with professional communicators such as journalists. Furthermore, a da'i needs to enhance their ability to utilize communication media as a preferred option for their da'wah initiatives. (Hakim, 2018)

Da'wah cannot be limited to traditional methods; it must also harness the advancements in technology that come with the current digital age. Consequently, it is essential to enhance the da'wah strategy to fully utilize these opportunities. Ustadz Azharul Husein employs various strategies to optimize preaching, which include: 1) disseminating knowledge and fostering trust among the audience; 2) establishing a dedicated team to manage da'wah across social media platforms; 3) developing websites that address various common religious issues encountered by the community; and 4) producing da'wah content for popular social media channels, such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and others. The challenges of preaching in the millennial era can be addressed by providing explanations that utilize accessible language and relatable, rational examples relevant to contemporary society. To tackle the challenges of da'wah during this period, it is also vital to cultivate and inspire the millennial generation to appreciate knowledge. The second approach involves linking the knowledge acquired to relevant issues faced in daily life. Lastly, the third strategy focuses on leveraging social media and adapting to current trends as a platform for preaching. (Nikmah, 2020)

h) Strategy To Confront Liberal Ideology

In facing the growing liberal ideology in Indonesia, especially in the context of Islamic da'wah, a comprehensive and strategic approach is very important. Discussing indicates in-depth research on the theological challenges faced by da'wah in Indonesia due to the influence of liberalism. By understanding the historical aspects and applying strategic analysis, effective ways to overcome the impact of liberalism in da'wah practice can be identified. (Cibik, 2018)

The first strategy is education and a deep understanding of Islamic teachings. Dissemination of the essence and authentic principles of Islam needs to be enhanced, especially among youth who are the main target of liberal influences. This involves providing da'wah materials that are not only attractive visually or



technologically, but also deep theologically, to equip the community with a strong understanding of their teachings. (Sajjad et al., 2017)

Second, interfaith and intercultural dialogue needs to be promoted as one of the strategies for facing liberalism. Through dialogue, a better understanding can be created and misunderstandings can be reduced. (Dulabaum, 2011) This involves not only discussing differences but also universal values that can bind all parties. This strategy is important because liberalism often promotes relativism which can lead to conflicts of values. (Vodičar, 2017)

Third, active involvement in social media and other digital platforms. Considering the strong role of social media in spreading liberal ideas, da'wah must also be active in this space to spread a balanced and engaging message. Using social media strategically, da'wah can reach a wider audience and provide alternative narratives that align with the principles of Islam. (Rohmatulloh et al., 2022)

Fourth, building partnerships with educational institutions and the government to integrate moderate Islamic values in public policies and curricula. This strategy can help establish a strong foundation for a society that understands and appreciates Islamic principles while remaining open to healthy pluralism. (Berghlund, 2018)

Fifth, da'wah needs to continue adapting and updating its methods in delivering the teachings of Islam. Innovation in da'wah methods, whether through the use of new technology, more effective interpersonal approaches, or the integration of art and culture in message delivery, is key to staying relevant in the modern era. (Sikumbang et al., 2024)

Through the implementation of these strategies, da'wah in Indonesia can be more effective in facing the challenges brought by liberalism, while still maintaining theological integrity and promoting a broader understanding of Islam as a mercy for all worlds.

D. Conclusion

Based on the insights provided regarding liberalism as a challenge to da'wah in the digital age, it can be inferred that liberalism represents an ideology or perspective that emphasizes the importance of individual rights and freedoms across various dimensions, including social, cultural, political, economic, educational, and religious spheres. The dissemination of this ideology typically occurs in three significant areas, targeting Islamic teachings for Islamic liberalization. This includes the liberalization of aqeedah through the promotion of

religious pluralism, the liberalization of sharia by altering the methodology of ijihad, and the liberalization of the concept of revelation via the deconstruction of the Al-Qur'an. The current era of globalization facilitates greater access to information, making it more readily available. In this rapidly evolving context, the ideology of liberalism actively seeks to challenge various groups, including Muslims. The interpretation and understanding of freedom of expression have led to numerous deviations, which are indicative of the liberalism phenomenon. This presents a unique challenge for da'wah in the digital age, one that can be addressed by effectively utilizing mass media. Should preachers or advocates choose to employ mass media as a platform for da'wah, it is essential that they possess a comprehensive understanding of the diverse media available in this digital landscape.

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