

Planning of Da'wah Nahdlatul Ulama in Tackling Online Gambling Behavior in the Muslim Community of Batang Toru District, South Tapanuli Regency

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Abstract

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is one of the Islamic organizations in Indonesia. In the current digital era, with the advancement of communication technology, especially in the field of smartphone technology, it has provided many conveniences that are useful in life, but on the other hand, it has also provided many disadvantages. The purpose of this discussion is to plan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) da'wah efforts in addressing online gambling behavior within the Batang Toru District community. This research is included in the type of qualitative descriptive research. The results of the study show that, in the context of da'wah, the strategies developed to eradicate online gambling are varied. Therefore, serious thinking and movement are needed for da'i to anticipate the onslaught of online gambling sites and activities. Because of the complexity of the causes of the spread of online gambling, its eradication also requires a planned and organized strategy. The first step in planning da'wah is to recognize the real conditions of society. For suggestions, NU can conduct a needs assessment through a participatory approach, such as community discussions, local surveys, and in-depth interviews with community leaders. With accurate data, da'wah planning can be arranged contextually.

Keywords: da'wah, gambling, strategy, technology



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Introduction

Planning plays a crucial role in the operation of organizations and institutions, serving as a foundation for management processes and enabling informed decisions and actions. It involves a careful process of determining future courses of action to achieve specific goals (Hamid, 2024). The success of an organization largely depends on how effectively it executes and controls strategies aligned with its plan, especially when encountering challenges, obstacles, and opportunities. Therefore, every implementer within an institution must possess strong planning skills to ensure optimal outcomes (Jubba et al., 2021). This principle also applies to Islamic da'wah organizations, which require structured planning to remain effective in modern contexts (Nastiti & Ratri, 2018).

Da'wah is the practical application of religious teachings in society, carried out systematically to influence human behavior and mindset (Fuad, 2020). Consequently, da'wah should be organized by institutions with strategic planning capabilities to make their messages more impactful and widely accepted (Basit, 2016). Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, with a strong commitment to da'wah efforts, including religious study forums, collective prayers, and spiritual activities (Rohman et al., 2024). This study focuses on NU's da'wah planning in response to the growing problem of online gambling within the Batang Toru District community. Despite the benefits brought by technological advancements, especially smartphones, these tools have also facilitated the spread of harmful practices such as online gambling (Suaedy et al., 2023).

The misuse of technology has made gambling more accessible, disguising it in the form of games or direct online betting (Mar, 2024). This behavior threatens community productivity and moral integrity. For instance, on January 24, 2025, the Batang Toru Police arrested a farmer engaged in online lottery gambling, exemplifying the real and local nature of this problem (Siregar, 2024).

Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the dangers of online gambling, which can negatively impact their moral development and lead to criminal behaviors due to immaturity and economic vulnerability (Schweiger & Graf, 2017). Contributing factors include peer pressure, unlimited internet access, persuasive advertising, lack of religious understanding, and inadequate parental supervision. Thus, the public must be educated about the severity of gambling through comprehensive da'wah activities. The increasing prevalence of online gambling in Indonesia, a country with a Muslim majority, is alarming and may result in widespread societal harm if not addressed (Sirait, 2024). Psychologically, online gambling leads to addiction and compulsive behavior (Chen & Leung, 2016), reducing an individual's ability to discern right from wrong (Adolphe et al., 2019). This destructive habit often ends in personal and financial ruin (Dzaki et al., 2024).

At a deeper level, such moral crises stem from the neglect of Islamic teachings as a holistic (kaffah) way of life (Rahman, 2024). Therefore, eradicating gambling requires comprehensive da'wah strategies that apply Islamic principles across the domains of aqidah (creed), social, economic, and political spheres. Strategically, da'wah must be well-planned, systematic, and target-oriented to address deeply rooted gambling behavior (Basir et al., 2024). Previous studies have explored the general role of da'wah in preventing deviant behaviors, including gambling. For example, Mastori analyzed normative-theological, educational, and technological approaches in addressing gambling (Mastori et al., 2024). Jasman highlighted the role of religious leaders in counseling (Jasman, 2022), while Setiawan (2024) focused on collaboration between ulama and umaro in community-based prevention (Setiawan, 2024). However, these studies did not elaborate on the internal planning process of Islamic organizations, especially NU, in forming and executing their da'wah strategies.

Although many studies have examined da'wah as a countermeasure to gambling, there is limited research that specifically addresses the internal, strategic planning process

conducted by NU at the grassroots level to combat online gambling. The integration of organizational planning theory with da'wah practices remains underexplored, particularly in rural Muslim-majority regions like Batang Toru. This research offers a new contribution by focusing on NU's organizational da'wah planning process, integrating religious outreach, community engagement, and digital media utilization in a localized context. It presents a contextualized, structured approach that differs from prior descriptive studies by formulating practical strategies rooted in planning theory and grassroots religious leadership.

Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by analyzing NU's structured da'wah planning in overcoming online gambling behavior in Batang Toru. It integrates perspectives from community engagement, digital platform utilization, and religious education to propose a strategic model suitable for local adaptation. With a qualitative approach, the study aims to provide a contextualized framework that contributes both to academic discourse and practical interventions.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method (Marliana, 2020). The qualitative approach was chosen to explore in depth the da'wah planning strategies employed by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in addressing online gambling behavior within the Muslim community of Batang Toru District. This method is suitable for understanding social phenomena in their natural context and emphasizing meaning rather than generalization. The research was conducted through several interrelated stages. First, the researcher identified the problem of online gambling behavior and conducted a literature review to understand existing perspectives on da'wah strategies and NU's organizational role. The subject of this research was Mr. Aminuddin Situmeang, the chairman of NU in Batang Toru District, chosen for his central role and insight into the planning and execution of NU's da'wah programs.

Data were collected using three main techniques: in-depth semi-structured interviews with the main informant to gather rich qualitative insights; non-participant observation of da'wah activities in the community to observe implementation practices and public response; and documentation review of NU's planning records, communication materials, and related reports.

To ensure data validity and reliability, the researcher applied triangulation by comparing and combining data from interviews, observations, and documents. The collected data were then analyzed using an inductive thematic approach, beginning with data reduction to select and focus on relevant findings. The data were then displayed thematically into categories such as planning, implementation, communication strategies, and community response. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying recurring patterns and strategic insights from the data. Overall, this research emphasized the meaning, context, and subjective experiences of the actors involved in NU's da'wah, aligning with the interpretive paradigm of qualitative inquiry. The method was designed to construct a comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of NU's localized response to the contemporary issue of online gambling.

Results and Discussion

Literature Review

The first research is a journal entitled "Da'wah Strategy to Eradicate Online Gambling in Indonesia" by Mastori. In this journal, the facts are explained showing that millions of Indonesian people can still access gambling sites and engage in these illegal games. This condition is very concerning because the practice of online gambling can definitely damage

the order of people's lives. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method to be able to understand the facts of online gambling in depth. The results of the study show that there are three da'wah strategies to eradicate online gambling, namely: First, a theological normative approach, namely by instilling an understanding of the haram and dangers of online gambling. Second, the educational approach is by involving the active role of teachers as da'i in the school environment. Third, the technological approach. The da'is can use da'wah strategies in the form of the use of digital media to spread anti-gambling content and develop alternative media platforms that are positive for the community. The similarity of this research with my research is to discuss the negative impact of online gambling and its countermeasures. Meanwhile, the difference is in the subject and object of research (Mastori et al., 2024).

The second research is a journal entitled "The Role of Religious Leaders in Overcoming Gambling Among the People of Tanjung Pasir Village, Kuala Betara District, West Tanjung Jabung Regency" by Jasman (Jasman, 2022). This research aims to find out the role of religious leaders in tackling gambling among the community. This study uses an approach with data collection methods through observation, interviews and documentation. The results of the study show that the role of religious leaders in tackling gambling among the community through weekly recitation. And through a Friday sermon explaining the prohibition of gambling. The obstacle of religious leaders in tackling gambling among the people of Tanjung Pasir Village is the weekly recitation and half-monthly recitation activities. The similarity of this research with my research is to discuss the negative impact of online gambling and its countermeasures. Meanwhile, the difference is in the subject and object of research.

The next research is a thesis entitled "Synergy of Ulama and Umaro Communication in Overcoming Online Gambling in Baktirasa Village, Sragi District, South Lampung Regency" by Yosep Setiawan (Setiawan, 2024). This study researches and discusses the synergy built between Ulama and Umaro in preventing online gambling crimes. This research is qualitative descriptive and carried out systematically based on facts. The results of the study were based on observations and interviews with respondents who were the object of the research. It is known that the synergy built by ulama and umaro in Baktirasa Village is a secondary crime prevention strategy by providing understanding to the public about the dangers of online gambling through recitations and events to commemorate Islamic holidays. The similarity of this research with my research is to discuss the negative impact of online gambling and its countermeasures. Meanwhile, the difference is in the subject and object of research.

The fourth research is a journal entitled "The Role of Islamic Organizations in Educating the Dangers of Online Gambling" by Maulana Yusup, (Maulana et al., 2024). In this digital era, it is explained that in this digital era, the phenomenon of online gambling has become a serious threat to the people of Indonesia, especially because of its ease of access through digital technology. The largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) have an important role in providing education to the public regarding the dangers of online gambling. This study aims to analyze the role of the two organizations in efforts to educate and eradicate online gambling practices. With a qualitative approach, this study collected data through a literature study in related journals. The findings show that Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) are actively conducting socialization, studies, and advocacy based on religion to increase public awareness. The active role of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) can be a strategic model in preventing and eradicating the negative impact of online gambling. The similarity of this research with my research is to discuss the negative impact of online gambling and its countermeasures. Meanwhile, the difference is in the subject and object of research.

Then the last research is a journal with the title "Da'wah Communication Strategies of Religious Leaders in Overcoming Online Gambling in Adolescents in Singapore Village, West Kikim District, Lahat Regency" by Rojabul Akbar Riansyah, (Riansyah et al., 2024). The purpose of this study is to find out the communication strategies of da'wah of religious leaders in overcoming online gambling in teenagers in Singapore Village, West Kikim District, Lahat Regency. The method used in this study uses a qualitative method. The results of the study show that the forms of online gambling that are usually played by teenagers in Singaporean village, West Kikim sub-district include: Slots, Poker, Roulette Casino, Parlai Bola Kaki, and Lottery. The da'wah communication strategy employed by Singaporean village religious leaders in combating online gambling is achieved through music and sports. The similarity of this research with my research is that it discusses the negative impact of online gambling and its countermeasures. Meanwhile, the difference is in the subject and object of research.

Gambling in an Islamic Perspective

From the standpoint of Islamic teachings, gambling (*maysir*) is unequivocally prohibited, as emphasized in both the Qur'an and Hadith. Gambling is categorized as *bathil*, or an unlawful practice, because it involves consuming wealth in ways that are not sanctioned by Islamic law (Rosenthal, 2024). This prohibition is grounded in Qur'anic verses, such as Al-Baqarah 188, which warns against unjust consumption of wealth and the manipulation of judicial authority for personal gain (Rassool, 2014). The verse emphasizes that such acts are sinful, and their consequences extend beyond the individual to society as a whole.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) reinforced this stance through Hadith, stating that those who pursue wealth through illicit means, including gambling, are destined for punishment in the Hereafter. Furthermore, merely inviting others to gamble is considered a sin that requires *kafarat* (atonement), as illustrated in another Hadith from Bukhari. These scriptural foundations highlight the severe moral and legal implications of gambling in Islam (Dahiru & Nasidi, 2025).

However, despite these religious prohibitions, the study found that online gambling remains prevalent and accessible through social media and digital platforms. Field data from Batang Toru District shows that many community members, especially youth, are exposed to gambling content without adequate religious knowledge to assess its dangers critically. This reinforces Pancasilawati's argument that religious ignorance, unchecked desire, and distorted thinking are the roots of disobedience. Therefore, da'wah becomes not only relevant but also urgent in addressing these issues (Pancasilawati, 2025).

In this context, the findings affirm that NU's da'wah efforts must go beyond doctrinal preaching. They must serve as a transformative process that internalizes Islamic values within the cognitive and behavioral frameworks of individuals. This perspective aligns with Islamic social theory and da'wah methodology that advocate for *mauidzah hasanah* (gentle advice) and *hikmah* (wisdom) in guiding individuals away from destructive behavior. By combining theological messages with practical, contextual communication strategies, NU can shift public perception and behavior regarding gambling from one of normalization to one of prohibition, grounded in faith and social responsibility.

Then special steps are needed in preaching in the digital and technological era now (Khasanah, 2022). Da'wah planning in the era of digitalization is an effective approach to prevent the deterioration of children's morals in Barang Toru. In this context, a da'i needs to be able to consider two important aspects related to da'wah.

First, the internal aspect of the da'wah manager itself and the aspect of da'wah itself. Second, external aspects involving supporting factors for the success of da'wah (positive factors) and inhibiting factors (negative factors). In order to formulate effective da'wah strategies, various disciplines such as systems analysis, psychology, anthropology, sociology, communication science, and planning science have a significant role. It is important to accurately apply knowledge from these various disciplines to ensure that the da'wah program can run well and achieve the goals that have been set (Supriadi et al., 2024). Parents are guided by a da'i by conveying that they educate their children religiously, become children with good morals, and motivate children to be more active in learning religion and emulate the morals of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

In this era of digitalization, there is a planning for moral deterioration because da'wah requires a certain amount of information in order to achieve the goals of da'wah effectively and is really based on and anticipating the existing reality (Kahfi et al., 2024). The information needed can be the following: The subject, environment, object, and method of da'wah are important considerations. In order to increase the effectiveness of da'wah planning, efforts are needed to maximize the potential of human resources involved in the implementation of da'wah, determine the right da'wah targets, and provide the necessary supporting facilities. In the current context, optimal da'wah planning equipped with well-planned da'wah elements will be able to turn negative conditions into positives, prevent bad behavior, and promote goodness, especially in the era of digitalization, with the main goal of preventing the decline in children's morals. Meanwhile, the broad factors that support or hinder the implementation of da'wah are influenced by external factors. Therefore, Muslims as supporting targets must be included in da'wah planning actions, while obstacles must be overcome to avoid or immediately eliminate all consequences (Ichwan et al., 2024).

Da'wah Strategy for the Eradication of Online Gambling

Da'wah has a very strategic role in overcoming various disobedience, including gambling (Putri & Sunata, 2024). Disobedience starts from ignorance of religion, following lust and wrong mindset. Through da'wah activities, a collective awareness will be formed in the community about the prohibition of gambling and the bad consequences it causes. Gambling is a disease of society that can damage vital organs of life. Therefore, if not prevented, the security and comfort of the community will be disturbed so that the eradication of gambling, in its various forms, is the collective responsibility of Muslims and even citizens as a whole (Rahardjo et al., 2024).

As a perfect religion, Islam has established methods to solve various problems, including gambling. This method should be believed and implemented by every Muslim and policy-maker in eradicating gambling. The problem of gambling, and other life problems is actually caused by the neglect and violation of Islamic teachings as a kaffah system of life (Dauda & Lawal, 2024). Therefore, on a macro level, the method of da'wah in eradicating gambling is to apply all Islamic teachings, both teachings related to aqidah, social, economic and political. At the level of implementation, it is necessary to think about a comprehensive da'wah strategy to uproot gambling that has been cultured to its roots. The strategy in question is a process in regulating, directing and determining ways and efforts to face the goals of da'wah in order to achieve the goals that can be achieved optimally.

The following are the steps or da'wah strategies to eradicate online gambling that can be realized by the da'i according to Mr. Aminuddin Situmeang as the chairman of NU Batang Toru District:

Theological Approach

The rise of gambling is often preceded by ignorance about Islamic law and the nature of following lust. Therefore, efforts to provide understanding, especially on aspects of Islamic law related to gambling, are important to be carried out and socialized by the da'i. Da'wah is the process of internalizing the values of Islamic teachings in human thought in order to have a strong Islamic creed until finally willing to submit and obey Islamic sharia voluntarily (Darmalaksana, n.d.).

The process of internalizing Islamic thought must be carried out in a sympathetic way. In the early stages, da'wah in wisdom and mauidzah hasanah is an important method to make people aware to stay away from all forms of gambling. The cultivation of awareness about the prohibition of gambling must be based on the solid values of Islamic beliefs, not other ideologies. Because no matter how carrying out orders or leaving prohibitions for a Muslim must be encouraged by Islamic aqidah so that it has two benefits, this world and the hereafter (Sirait, 2024). The postulates of the Qur'an and the sunnah about the prohibition of gambling are important to be conveyed to the ummah, both in personal and public da'wah. At the next stage, da'wah can also be accompanied by a stern warning due to gambling. For example, by instilling an understanding that gambling is a method of obtaining wealth in an unlawful way that is not allowed by sharia.

In addition, families also have a role and responsibility in overcoming the phenomenon of online gambling among children and adolescents. As Allah says: 'O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from the fire of Hell whose fuel is men and stones; His guardians are the angels who are harsh, harsh, and do not disobey Allah in what He commands them and always do what He commands (Karim & Wajdi, 2019) (Q.S At-Tahrim: 6). Moreover, the first party that will be affected by gambling is the family. According to a study, most gamblers, both online and conventional, have experienced financial problems that directly or indirectly affect their families. sale of assets as well as criminal acts such as theft.

Educational Approach

Islamic da'wah is an informal or non-formal activity. It can be done flexibly. Anywhere and anytime. In formal and non-formal institutions. It's just that the strategy and ushulub are different. In this regard, education, whether primary, secondary or tertiary, is an institution that is generally formal in nature that must be an important testament to instill understanding and danger of gambling in students and students.

Individually, teachers or lecturers who also play the role of da'i can deliver material about gambling and its dangers to prevent online gambling from students and students. Curriculum-wise, teachers who are also da'i can encourage a special curriculum that explains the importance of being bound by Islamic law and the dangers of gambling for the future life of students. This is based on the fact that the number of students involved in online gambling is huge. The phenomenon of online gambling is even more tragic because many of the players are students and students (Lukman & Nisa, 2022).

Informally, da'i also need to make contacts with the school or campus environment to campaign against gambling and instill awareness of the dangers of online gambling. According to researchers, da'is need to form or activate da'wah institutions, both in the form of school da'wah institutions and campus da'wah institutions that focus on providing guidance to students or students so that they are installed in their Islamic faith (Nurfatimah

et al., 2025). This belief will be the guardian of every student/student from the dangers of gambling. Strengthening school da'wah institutions requires cooperation from various parties, namely teachers, da'I, the government, and even Islamic organizations such as NU. Although from that side it is actually also in the position of da'i.

The phenomenon of online gambling in Batang Toru District cannot be separated from the technological developments that have occurred in the last decade. The availability of internet networks and digital devices has expanded people's access to various forms of information, including entertainment content with negative content. One such form of content is online gambling sites that offer the lure of instant financial gains. It needs to be recognized that economic motives are one of the main drivers for people to fall into online gambling practices, especially in the midst of unstable economic conditions and high unemployment rates. In this context, Nahdlatul Ulama as a religious organization has a moral and social responsibility to protect the ummah from the dangers of this prohibited practice. The da'wah planning carried out by NU is not only oriented to the verbal delivery of religious material, but also targets the structural and cultural aspects that are the background for the emergence of such deviant behavior (Pratama & Annuha, 2024).

The first step in effective da'wah planning is to conduct social mapping. NU through the NU Da'wah Institute (LDNU) needs to identify the groups of people who are most vulnerable to the influence of online gambling. This group is typically made up of teenagers, youth, and low-income communities. Once the target group is determined, NU needs to understand their characteristics, including their level of education, access to technology, and the cultural values they embrace.

The next step is to set realistic and measurable da'wah goals. In the context of eradicating online gambling, the purpose of da'wah can be directed at increasing public awareness about the haram law of gambling, understanding the negative impact of online gambling, and forming attitudes and behaviors that distance themselves from the practice. These objectives must be formulated specifically so that they can be translated into operational programs (Rahmi et al., 2023). The da'wah material that is prepared must be contextual and communicative. The use of the postulates of the Qur'an and Hadith is certainly the main foundation, but the delivery of material must be adjusted to the level of understanding of the community. In this case, NU can develop da'wah modules that are not only normative, but also educational and inspiring. Da'wah material should be delivered in the form of real stories, easy-to-understand analogies, and presentations about the socio-economic impact of online gambling.

The da'wah methods applied must be diverse and innovative. In addition to using conventional methods such as lectures and recitations, NU can develop a cultural da'wah approach that touches on aspects of people's daily lives. For example, through Islamic arts, group discussions, skills training, and social activities involving community leaders and religious leaders. This approach allows da'wah messages to be conveyed subtly but still effectively (M.Ag et al., 2025). In addition, NU needs to develop digital da'wah as a response to shifts in public communication behavior. The use of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok can be an effective means to reach the younger generation. Da'wah content packaged in the form of short videos, infographics, animations, and podcasts can be an interesting alternative to convey religious messages. In this case, NU needs to involve the young generation who have high digital literacy to be part of the digital da'wah creative team.

Strengthening the capacity of dai is also an important aspect in da'wah planning. Dai must have good communication skills, deep Islamic insights, and an understanding of the social and cultural dynamics of society. NU needs to hold regular dai training with materials

that include contemporary da'wah strategies, public speaking techniques, the use of digital media, and psychological approaches in da'wah.

Da'wah carried out by NU also needs to be supported by synergy with various parties, such as local governments, police, schools, and other community organizations. This synergy can strengthen the reach of da'wah and create a social environment conducive to behavior change. For example, cooperation with schools can be done through anti-gambling counseling to students and parents, while cooperation with the police can be directed towards closing access to online gambling sites and law enforcement against gamblers.

In addition to the preventive approach, NU also needs to develop a rehabilitative approach for people who have fallen into online gambling practices. This approach includes psychological assistance, religious counseling, and economic empowerment through skills training and opening up access to employment. With this approach, online gamblers are not only stopped from their deviant behavior, but also given a better alternative life (Asmar, 2020).

Evaluation of the da'wah program carried out is also very important to find out its effectiveness and impact on society. This evaluation can be carried out through surveys, interviews, and joint evaluation forums between dai and the community. The results of the evaluation are the basis for improving da'wah programs and strategies that are more in line with the needs of the community. In the long term, NU can also build an online anti-gambling consultation and education center that functions as a place for information, advocacy, and mentoring services. This center can be a symbol of NU's commitment to fighting online gambling in a systematic and structured manner (Asmar, 2018).

Overall, NU's da'wah planning in tackling online gambling behavior in Batang Toru District must be carried out holistically, participatoryly, and adaptive to the changing times. With a planned and collaborative approach, NU can not only save the public from the dangers of online gambling, but also form a more obedient, productive, and dignified generation of Muslims.

Challenges Faced

Although NU has an extensive network, the biggest challenge in preventing online gambling lies in the low digital literacy among the people of the Batang Toru District. Many residents do not fully comprehend the risks posed by online gambling, nor possess the necessary knowledge to protect themselves. This condition makes it difficult for digital da'wah messages to be effectively received or interpreted as intended. As a response, NU needs to intensify digital literacy programs and combine them with direct community approaches, such as mosque-based da'wah and activities in Islamic boarding schools (Murharyana et al., 2024). These efforts are necessary to make information about the dangers of online gambling more accessible to communities with limited digital exposure.

There are several key challenges that NU faces in tackling online gambling in Batang Toru. First, the widespread use of the internet is not accompanied by the ability to use it wisely, making digital da'wah efforts less effective (Farid & Saputra, 2021). Second, a general lack of awareness regarding the dangers of online gambling, viewed by many as mere entertainment, poses a major barrier (Igomu et al., 2024). Third, the presence of a consumptive culture and an instant lifestyle nurtures a mindset conducive to gambling practices (Cartile, 2020). Fourth, many local NU branches suffer from limited da'i resources and media infrastructure, reducing their ability to respond to modern issues using digital means. Fifth, institutional support at the local level is often minimal, with NU operating independently of government or Law enforcement collaboration. Sixth, youth are more influenced by digital influencers promoting a hedonistic lifestyle than by traditional religious figures. Seventh, access to online gambling remains extremely easy, with new sites

emerging despite government blocking efforts. Lastly, da'wah is often perceived as monotonous and overly normative, highlighting the urgent need for innovative and engaging delivery methods.

Based on these challenges, several strategic recommendations are proposed. NU must optimize the role of local-level da'wah institutions by building contextual planning capacity at the MWC and branch levels (Damayanti & Sahputra, 2025). Strengthening digital literacy among da'i is vital so they can effectively engage in counter-narratives via social media and digital platforms (Idwin et al., 2025). The preparation of da'wah materials should address gambling not only from a religious perspective but also from psychological, economic, and legal angles (Salam et al., 2024). Furthermore, NU must actively collaborate with local governments, schools, police, and community leaders to build integrated responses (Audet & Roy, 2016). Innovative and participatory da'wah models, such as group discussions, training sessions, or thematic youth forums, should replace purely sermon-based methods. Social mapping must also be conducted to identify vulnerable groups, enabling the more effective targeting of messages. In parallel, economic empowerment programs should be integrated with da'wah to provide alternative livelihoods. Lastly, family-based character education needs to be emphasized through parenting classes and youth mentoring, as the family is the first line of moral defense against gambling temptation.

Theoretical Reflection on NU's Strategic Da'wah Against Online Gambling

The findings of this study reveal that Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Batang Toru employs a comprehensive da'wah planning model that integrates religious values, communication strategies, and a contextual understanding of the community. This aligns with the theoretical perspective of strategic communication planning, which emphasizes message formulation, audience analysis, media selection, and feedback loops to ensure communicative effectiveness (Romdoni & Ms, 2025). The NU approach also reflects the principles of participatory communication, where community engagement is prioritized to foster collective awareness and action.

From the standpoint of Islamic social theory, the prohibition of gambling is rooted in the concept of *maysir* (gambling) as a destructive social vice. The da'wah messages structured by NU are based on Qur'anic injunctions and Hadith, particularly those emphasizing the immorality and social harm of gambling (Rassool, 2014; Rosenthal, 2024). This religious framework serves as the foundation of the theological approach taken in NU's campaigns. The application of *mauidzah hasanah* (gentle advice) and *hikmah* (wisdom) in delivering these messages represents a practical application of da'wah methodology advocated by classical and contemporary scholars (Darmalaksana, n.d.).

Educational theory also underpins NU's approach, especially in targeting youth through formal and non-formal education. The integration of anti-gambling content into school curricula and extracurricular religious programs is supported by findings from Lukman & Nisa (2022), who emphasized the significance of early intervention in educational settings. Furthermore, NU's utilization of digital platforms for da'wah is consistent with communication and media theories that highlight the role of digital media in shaping public opinion and behavior in the 21st century (Khasanah, 2022; Ichwan et al., 2024).

In terms of institutional theory, NU's model exemplifies how religious organizations can serve as agents of social change by leveraging their moral authority, organizational network, and cultural capital. This aligns with the theoretical propositions that well-organized and contextually responsive religious institutions can serve as catalysts in addressing complex social problems, such as online gambling (Supriadi et al., 2024; Damayanti & Sahputra, 2025). Thus, NU's strategy combines normative, preventive, and

rehabilitative efforts in a framework that is simultaneously religious, pedagogical, and sociological.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of online gambling in Indonesia, particularly within Muslim communities, presents a significant social threat. Despite being a country with the largest Muslim population, Indonesia has become increasingly vulnerable to the proliferation of online gambling. If left unaddressed, this condition could disrupt the fabric of society across social, economic, and political dimensions. Islam, as a comprehensive and solution-oriented religion, provides a strong foundation for addressing such issues through da'wah. This study found that the prevalence of online gambling in Batang Toru District is influenced by four major interrelated factors: weak theological understanding, economic vulnerability, limited human resources, and insufficient policy enforcement. These factors collectively contribute to the persistence of gambling practices and highlight the need for a comprehensive response. In response to this issue, the study revealed that Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) employs a structured da'wah planning model, which involves community understanding, targeted messaging, contextual approaches, and effective media utilization. Theological reinforcement, educational strategies, and digital engagement support these.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that NU's da'wah planning in Batang Toru is not only reactive but also anticipatory and strategic. The results affirm that addressing online gambling requires contextual, participatory, and adaptive religious engagement. Moreover, successful eradication of online gambling behavior necessitates collaboration among religious institutions, educators, local leaders, and the government. These conclusions directly align with the study's objectives and contribute to the broader discourse on religious-based social transformation in the digital era.

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