



THE RHETORIC OF THE INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT @GUSMIFTAH'S DAKWAH IN BROADCASTING RELIGIOUS MODERATION

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the preaching rhetoric used by the Instagram account @gusmiftah in spreading the values of religious moderation. Using a descriptive qualitative approach and content analysis, this study examines three video uploads of Gus Miftah's preaching and audience responses. The results show that Gus Miftah effectively applies three elements of Aristotle's rhetoric: ethos (credibility as a cleric), pathos (emotional power through persuasive language), and logos (logical argumentation supported by Quranic verses) to convey messages of religious moderation such as tolerance, unity, and anti-extremism. Despite some criticism, the majority of audience responses are positive, demonstrating the effectiveness of his digital preaching strategy. This study concludes that Aristotle's rhetoric is still relevant in the context of digital preaching and can serve as a model for preachers in spreading moderate Islam on social media.

Keywords: Preaching Rhetoric, Religious Moderation, Gus Miftah, Instagram, Aristotle.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis retorika dakwah yang digunakan oleh akun Instagram @gusmiftah dalam menyebarkan nilai moderasi beragama. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dan analisis isi, penelitian ini mengkaji tiga unggahan video dakwah Gus Miftah beserta tanggapan audiens. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Gus Miftah secara efektif menerapkan tiga elemen retorika Aristoteles yaitu ethos (kredibilitas sebagai ulama), pathos (daya emosional melalui bahasa persuasif), dan logos (argumentasi logis yang didukung dalil Al-Qur'an) untuk menyampaikan pesan moderasi beragama seperti toleransi, persatuan, dan anti-ekstremisme. Meskipun mendapat beberapa kritik, mayoritas respons audiens bersifat positif, menunjukkan efektivitas strategi dakwah digitalnya. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa retorika Aristoteles masih relevan dalam konteks dakwah digital dan dapat menjadi model bagi pendakwah dalam menyebarkan Islam yang moderat di media sosial.

Kata Kunci: Retorika Dakwah, Modeasi Beragama, Gus Miftah, Instagram, Aristoteles

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes to various aspects of life, including the methods of conveying religious messages (Hefni, 2020). While previously preaching was mostly conducted face-to-face in mosques, religious study groups, or religious forums, this pattern has now begun to shift with the advent of digital media (Hermaya, 2024). The presence of social media allows

religious messages to be conveyed without the constraints of space and time, allowing them to be accessed anytime and anywhere. According to data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), the number of internet users in Indonesia reached 79.5% in 2024, demonstrating the high penetration of technology in society (Hew, 2018).

Da'wah is essentially a call to goodness through speech, writing, and concrete actions, with the aim of inviting humanity to achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter (Niki, 2023). In this context, social media serves not only as an alternative channel but also as a primary medium for disseminating Islamic messages. One important aspect of da'wah communication is rhetoric, namely the art of speaking effectively, persuasively, and capable of building emotional closeness with the audience. Rhetoric is not only about conveying religious messages, but also establishing credibility (ethos), arousing emotions (pathos), and presenting logical arguments (logos). In the digital era, rhetoric is increasingly important because da'wah messages reach a global audience with diverse background (Hidayat, 2023).

Rhetoric itself has a dual function: for the audience (mass information, mass education, mass persuasion, mass entertainment) and for the speaker (guiding decision-making, understanding audience psychology, composing accurate reviews, and defending the truth with rational reasons). Aristotle defined rhetoric as the ability to find available persuasive tools in every situation (Dedeh Sry Handayani, 2018). Thus, the rhetoric of da'wah can be understood as the da'wah's effort to choose the most effective form of expression to attract the audience's attention, with the aim of guiding the people towards happiness in this world and the hereafter (M, 2024).

However, the challenge of digital preaching is ensuring the message remains relevant, authentic, and aligned with the values of religious moderation. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (2019), religious moderation emphasizes a balanced and tolerant religious attitude and a rejection of extremism. Recent research confirms that religious moderation is crucial for strengthening multiculturalism in Indonesia while countering radicalism (Rokhmad, 2024; Warsito, 2023; Faiz, 2023). In fact, through digital spaces, on campuses, and in public spaces, the value of religious moderation continues to be promoted to strengthen awareness of diversity (Jakarta Religious Research and Development Center, 2024).

In the context of digital da'wah, Gus Miftah (Miftah Maulana Habiburrahman) is one figure who consistently utilizes social media, especially Instagram, as a means of da'wah. Unlike most da'wah preachers who preach in mosques and religious assemblies, Gus Miftah is also known to preach in nightclubs and red-light districts in Yogyakarta. His official Instagram account, @gusmiftah, has over 2.2 million followers, with diverse content ranging from sermon excerpts and short religious messages to interactions with the congregation. These characteristics make Gus Miftah interesting to study, particularly in the context of da'wah rhetoric and the spread of religious moderation values in the digital space (Achmad, 2022). Based on this background, the formulation of the research problem is: (1) how does Gus Miftah apply Aristotle's rhetoric (ethos, pathos, logos) in his preaching on the Instagram account @gusmiftah, and (2) how are the values of religious moderation conveyed through this preaching rhetoric.

The purpose of this study is to analyze Gus Miftah's rhetorical da'wah strategy on Instagram based on an Aristotelian approach, while also uncovering the relevance of his da'wah message in strengthening religious moderation in a multicultural society (Huda, 2021). This research is expected to be academically beneficial as a contribution to the development of digital da'wah and rhetoric studies, and practically can serve as a reference

for da'wah practitioners in utilizing social media as a means of spreading moderate, tolerant, and contemporary Islamic values (Achfandhy, 2022).

There are several related literatures about this research variable that can be used as a reference for writing the thesis, namely: 1. The first research, the thesis of Titin Rahmawati (2018) a communication student and Islamic Broadcaster at Sunan Ampel State Islamic University entitled "Semiotic Analysis of Oki Setiana Dewi's Preaching Rhetorical Style in the Story of the Moments of the Prophet Muhammad's Death on Youtube Media". The study aims to determine the language style, voice style, and body movement style of Oki Setiana Dewi in the story of the moments of the Prophet Muhammad's death using Ferdinand De Saussure's semiotic analysis model. The research conducted by Titin Rahmawati has similarities with my research, namely using Ferdinand De Saussure's semiotic analysis model. The difference lies in Titin's rhetoric, which uses rhetorical style while I use rhetorical canon (Rahmawati, 2018). The second relevant research was conducted by Dwi Setio Purnomo (2018), a student of Islamic communication and broadcasting, Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, Sunan Ampel State Islamic University, entitled "Da'wah Messages in Television Talk Shows (Analysis of Gus Miftah's Da'wah Messages in the Hitam Putih Trans7 Program, September 26, 2018 Edition)". This research explains that in every conversation conducted by Gus Miftah on the Hitam Putih program, there are several da'wah messages that can be taken (A. 2024). With the Van Dijk discourse structure scheme which is divided into three parts, namely, macro structure, super structure, and micro structure. The research that Dwi Setio Purnomo did has similarities with my research, namely about Gus Miftah. Only this research examines Gus Miftah's Da'wah Messages in the Hitam Putih program (Purnama, 2018)

This research presents a novelty by focusing on the use of da'wah rhetoric via Instagram by community figure Gus Miftah, in an effort to voice religious moderation in a digital society. Unlike previous studies that tend to emphasize conventional da'wah or video-based lectures, this study explores how visual narratives and short texts on social media can influence public understanding of tolerant and inclusive Islamic values. Thus, this research offers theoretical and practical contributions to the strategy of developing da'wah in the new media era and maps the image of Islamic moderation in the digital space.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to understand the phenomenon of da'wah rhetoric on social media in depth (Moleong, 2021). The method used is content analysis of the Instagram account @gusmiftah, specifically in conveying messages of religious moderation (Krippendorff, 2019). Primary data consists of three da'wah video uploads along with captions and audience opinions, while secondary data is obtained from literature related to digital da'wah, rhetoric, and religious moderation. Three videos were selected purposively with the following criteria: (1) containing various moderation themes, (2) high interaction levels, and (3) published within the past year. Primary data includes video content, captions, and audience opinions, while secondary data comes from literature related to digital da'wah, rhetoric, and religious moderation. The analysis was carried out in three stages: coding relevant data, grouping into thematic categories and interpreting meaning using Aristotle's rhetorical theory (Keraf, 2022). Data validity is maintained through triangulation: (1) data triangulation (video, captions, comments), (2) theory triangulation (rhetoric and religious moderation), (3) method triangulation (content analysis and literature study), and (4) researcher triangulation through discussions between colleagues (Sugiyono, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social media has become a crucial tool for disseminating religious messages and religious moderation (Hutabarat, 2023). Instagram, a platform predominantly used by the younger generation, provides ample space for preachers to convey messages that are tolerant, peaceful, and in line with moderate Islamic values. This study focuses on how Gus Miftah, through his Instagram account @gusmiftah, utilizes social media to campaign for religious moderation with a creative and persuasive approach.

Gus Miftah Maulana Habiburrahman, born in Lampung on August 5, 1981, is a young Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) cleric known for his unique preaching style. He began his preaching at the age of 21 in the Pasar Kembang area of Yogyakarta, approaching night workers and holding religious study groups after obtaining permission from the venue's management (Indrioko 2023). Despite initial challenges, his preaching was widely accepted. In 2011, he founded the Ora Aji Islamic Boarding School in Sleman, Yogyakarta, which has had a significant impact on piety. Today, Gus Miftah actively preaches at Islamic boarding schools and various venues outside of them, including through social media. In spreading his da'wah in the digital era, Gus Miftah is also active on social media, especially Instagram with the official account @gusmiftah which has more than 2.2 million followers (2025). Through this account, Gus Miftah often shares da'wah content, Islamic boarding school activities, and messages of religious moderation that reach a wider audience.



Source: Gus Miftah's Instagram account

Gus Miftah is known as a preacher who combines religious values with a relaxed and entertaining communication style. This strategy is effective in attracting a diverse audience, especially millennials and Gen Z. The messages of moderation conveyed include tolerance, anti-extremism, and calls for unity amidst differences. The content approach used is not only through formal lectures, but also through interactive dialogue, humor, and the use of simple captions for easy understanding by the audience. To clarify how the value of religious moderation is conveyed in Gus Miftah's Instagram content, the following is an analysis table containing the content themes and approaches used:

Table 1
Analysis of Religious Moderation Content on Instagram

No	Content Moderation Date	Content Approach
1	Tolerance, harmony, helping each other, Islam is a mercy for the universe https://www.instagram.com/reel/DJGYRmGR1eF/?igsh=MXgxYngzZTl3bG9tcg== May 1, 2025	Persuasive – an invitation to maintain harmony and share as a form of Islamic compassion
2	Respecting differences in beliefs, living side by side in peace https://www.instagram.com/reel/DCIRsJRpZsW/?igsh=M21tYXNuNDR4eDM2 November 20, 2024	Educational – explanatory narrative, emphasizing the importance of mutual respect
3	Maintaining balance in religion, avoiding extreme attitudes https://www.instagram.com/reel/DHgE3Rev0ay/?igsh=MXgxZXV6Znh1ZHA0dg== March 22, 2025	Argumentative–rational rhetoric, logical emphasis on the dangers of excessive attitudes

source: Instagram platform

In addition to analyzing the content of the Islamic preaching videos uploaded to the Instagram account @gusmiftah, researchers also examined audience responses through the comments section. This analysis aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the congregation's perception, acceptance, and response to the Islamic preaching messages delivered. The comment data obtained was then processed and interpreted to determine the extent to which Gus Miftah's Islamic preaching content was understood, appreciated, and criticized by the audience. Thus, this comment analysis complements the study of the video content, providing a more comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of Gus Miftah's Islamic preaching rhetoric in broadcasting religious moderation in the digital space.



Source: Instagram @gusmiftah

First, a content analysis was conducted on a video uploaded to the Instagram account @gusmiftah on May 1, 2025. In the video, Gus Miftah discusses the importance of sharing and helping each other regardless of religious differences. He emphasized that Muslims are allowed to accept gifts from non-Muslims, and vice versa, non-Muslims are allowed to

accept gifts from Muslims. This message demonstrates the principles of tolerance and universal brotherhood, which align with the Islamic concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (blessing for the universe). In his lecture, Gus Miftah said:

"Muslims may accept gifts from non-Muslims, and non-Muslims may also accept gifts from Muslims. This is a form of affection and a real form of mutual respect."

This quote demonstrates the use of pathos rhetoric, as Gus Miftah attempts to evoke empathy in his audience, encouraging them not to limit themselves in social relationships simply because of differences in belief. Logos rhetoric is also evident, as this statement is supported by logical arguments that Islam teaches harmony and sharing goodness.

The @faradilla_s account offered comments such as "MasyaAllah, always keep up the spirit, Dad." This comment demonstrates support for Gus Miftah's preaching of religious moderation. Other positive responses include "Subhanallah, always a blessing, Dad," which demonstrates the audience's appreciation for the message of tolerance conveyed. However, on the other hand, there were also critical or negative comments, such as "Why don't you read the Quran while studying?" This suggests doubts about Gus Miftah's preaching methods. Similar comments also appeared in the form of questions or sarcasm linking digital preaching to the authenticity of traditional teachings.

This balance of positive and negative comments demonstrates that da'wah on social media not only receives support but also serves as a space for public discourse open to criticism. Positively, audience support confirms the relevance of the message of religious moderation, while criticism indicates that some still demand conventional forms of da'wah. This underscores the dual function of social media: as a means of spreading the values of tolerance and as a space for religious dialogue and debate.



Source: Instagram @gusmiftah

An analysis of a video uploaded to the Instagram account @gusmiftah on November 20, 2024, highlighted the importance of respecting differences in faith in national life. Gus Miftah emphasized that Indonesia is a shared home whose harmony must be maintained, despite being inhabited by people from diverse religious backgrounds. In his lecture, he said:

"The Indonesian nation is a big house that shelters everyone, regardless of differences. In this nation, differences will unite, not divide. Differences become a reason to complement each other, not antagonize. Differences become a reason to stand side by side, not compete."

This message is in line with the words of Allah SWT in QS Al-Hujurat: 13

وَإِنِّى وَجَعَلْتُكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنََّّ **God willing** عَلَیْمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾ **God bless you**

"O people! Indeed, We have created you from a man and a woman, then We made you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other. Indeed, the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most pious. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Knowing."

This verse emphasizes that differences are the law of God, not to be argued about but rather a means of getting to know one another. Gus Miftah's rhetoric combines logos (the logical argument that differences are the nation's strength) and pathos (the emotional appeal of calling for togetherness and love for one's country).

In Gus Miftah's video upload on May 1, 2025, audience responses in the comments section showed a negative trend. This was related to the controversy that had arisen regarding Gus Miftah's statement about "sweet iced tea," which was considered offensive to some. Negative comments were evident in expressions such as "When what is conveyed is inversely proportional to his morals" (@sabineandheem). "INTROPECTION MIFTAAAAAAH" (@istilaa). "How much did Gus get today from selling religion?" (@gilangramadhann_6).

The comments reflect the harsh criticism directed at Gus Miftah, both regarding his personal integrity and accusations of commercializing his preaching. This criticism demonstrates that preaching on social media is not always received positively but also faces public resistance, questioning the consistency between words and actions. Nevertheless, there were still positive comments, such as "Be healthy, Abah" (@windi_listyani).

These positive comments indicate that some audience members still provide moral support. Therefore, the audience response to this content tends to be unbalanced, with negative comments outweighing positive appreciation. This phenomenon aligns with research findings that social media is a public space that not only disseminates Islamic preaching but also opens up opportunities for criticism and resistance against religious figures (Rauf et al., 2024). This situation presents a unique challenge for preachers in building ethos (credibility), as credibility in the digital space is heavily influenced by public perception.



source: Instagram @gusmiftah

Further analysis was conducted on a video uploaded to the Instagram account @gusmiftah on March 22, 2025. It did not feature a live oral sermon, but instead used a caption as a means of preaching. The caption read:

"If you are religious, know this: all religions teach compassion, honesty, tolerance, and justice. Learn those values and practice them with pride."

This message emphasizes that all religions essentially teach universal values such as compassion, honesty, tolerance, and justice. This caption can be understood as a form of logos rhetoric because it emphasizes logical reasoning that good values are not unique to one religion but are universal. At the same time, there is an element of pathos because the use of the phrase "practice with pride" inspires the audience to internalize religious values in their daily lives. This message also aligns with Allah's word in Surah Al-Mumtahanah verse 8:

لَا يَنْهَىٰكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ
الْمُقْسِطِينَ

"Allah does not forbid you to do good and be fair to those who do not fight you because of religion and do not (nor) expel you from your land. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly."

The audience response to Gus Miftah's video upload on March 22, 2025, was mostly positive. Many comments showed support and prayers for Gus Miftah to remain healthy and consistent in preaching. Such as: "Masyallah tabarakallah even when criticized, he does not fall, always healthy Gus, God willing, all of this will be a valuable lesson" (@wulansari_1109). "Hopefully, there will be blessings in this world and the hereafter for all of you" (@effendi5308). "Keep your spirits up Gus" (@andyrasinja). "Always keep your spirits up @gusmiftah, healthy and blessed, let the dogs bark as the caravan passes" (@gemi_robin). "Masyallah Tabarakallah always be a blessing" (@faradilla_94). These comments show the appreciation and loyalty of the majority of the audience towards Gus Miftah, especially in responding to the controversy that had arisen. This support also indicates that many of his followers understand Gus Miftah's message of tolerance, compassion, and justice, as outlined in the video caption. However, some comments

contained a hint of sarcasm, such as: "Do you still remember the men selling iced tea?" (@ty6.ms). This comment indicates that a small portion of the audience still associates Gus Miftah's preaching with previous controversies. Overall, however, the proportion of positive comments is far more dominant, thus concluding that Gus Miftah's preaching continues to enjoy widespread support amidst the dynamics of public opinion.

This phenomenon supports the findings of Rauf et al. (2024) that social media can be a space that displays diverse responses to digital da'wah: there is support, criticism, and resistance, but the dominance of support indicates the effectiveness of da'wah rhetoric in building a positive image in the digital space.

To clarify the results of the analysis, the following is a summary of the use of Aristotle's rhetoric (ethos, pathos, logos) in three posts by the Instagram account @gusmiftah regarding religious moderation.

Table 2
Analysis of Aristotle's Rhetoric in @gusmiftah's Instagram Content

No	Date Uploads	Theme Content	Ethos (Credibility)	Pathos (Emotion)	Logos (Logic)	The Value of Religious Moderation
1	May 1, 2025	Universal Tolerance and Brotherhood	Gus Miftah appears as an NU cleric and founder of the Ora Aji Islamic boarding school	Using the words "affection", "mutual respect" to arouse empathy	The argument that Islam teaches sharing without distinguishing between religions.	Tolerance, solidarity, rahmatan lil 'alamin
2	November 20, 2024	Unity in Diversity	Positioning yourself as a figure who cares about national unity	The expression "big house" creates a sense of togetherness.	Strengthened by QS Al-Hujurat:13 about the sunnatullah of differences	Tolerance, unity, anti-extremism
3	March 22, 2025	Universal Values of Religion	Building an image as a moderate and anti-extremist preacher	The phrase "practice with pride" is uplifting.	The logical statement that all religions teach goodness is reinforced by QS Al-Mumtahanah:8	Tolerance, justice, anti-extremism

Source: Results of the description above

The data above summarizes the use of Aristotelian rhetoric in three of Gus Miftah's Islamic preaching posts. This summary shows that each post combines ethos, pathos, and logos to persuasively communicate the value of religious moderation. Based on an analysis of three posts on the Instagram account @gusmiftah, it can be concluded that Gus Miftah consistently applies elements of Aristotelian rhetoric: ethos, demonstrated through his credibility as a NU cleric and moderate figure; pathos, through the use of emotional language that touches the audience's hearts; and logos, through logical arguments reinforced by citations of Quranic verses. This rhetorical strategy is effective in conveying the values of religious moderation, such as tolerance, unity, justice, and anti-extremism, in the digital space. This finding aligns with previous research by Nugroho (2020), which demonstrated that digital Islamic preaching rhetoric can shape collective awareness of tolerance through social media. Furthermore, Rohimah (2021) also found that the combination of ethos-pathos-

logos in YouTube sermons creates a strong persuasive appeal, especially among young people. However, this study makes a more specific contribution by focusing on religious moderation in the context of Instagram, which has not been widely explored in previous studies. Thus, the second research question is comprehensively answered and simultaneously confirms the relevance of Aristotle's rhetorical theory in contemporary digital da'wah practices.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on three posts on the Instagram account @gusmiftah, it can be concluded that Gus Miftah consistently uses elements of Aristotelian rhetoric, namely ethos, pathos, and logos, in conveying his da'wah message. Ethos is evident through his credibility as a NU cleric and founder of the Ora Aji Islamic Boarding School, which emphasizes moral and scientific authority. Pathos is seen in the use of persuasive language, emotionally touching metaphors, and calls for togetherness that arouse audience sympathy. Logos is reflected through logical arguments reinforced by verses from the Quran, such as QS Al-Hujurat: 13 and QS Al-Mumtahanah: 8, so that the da'wah message becomes more rational and acceptable to various groups. In addition, the values of religious moderation such as tolerance, unity, anti-extremism, and justice are conveyed creatively through video content, captions, and interactions in the comments column. This da'wah strategy is able to reach a wide audience, especially the younger generation of social media users, although it still faces challenges in the form of criticism and resistance from some netizens. However, the dominance of positive comments indicates that Gus Miftah's preaching rhetoric is effective in communicating the message of Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin in the digital space. Thus, the two research problem formulations are answered, namely (1) the form of Aristotelian rhetoric used by Gus Miftah includes ethos, pathos, and logos, and (2) the value of religious moderation is conveyed through preaching messages that emphasize tolerance, harmony, and anti-extremism. These findings confirm that Aristotelian rhetoric remains relevant and applicable in digital preaching in the social media era.

This research contributes to strengthening Aristotle's rhetorical theory in the context of digital da'wah. The findings show that the elements of ethos, pathos, and logos are not only relevant in classical communication but also effectively applied in social media, particularly Instagram. This broadens the understanding of rhetorical theory in the context of digital religious communication, where audiences are massive, heterogeneous, and responsive in real time. This research also adds to the academic discourse on how narratives of religious moderation can be constructed through rhetorical strategies that adapt to the characteristics of new media. Practically, this research can serve as a reference for preachers, Islamic content creators, and da'wah institutions in developing more persuasive and moderate digital communication strategies. The balanced use of rhetoric between credibility (ethos), emotion (pathos), and logic (logos) has been proven to reach a wider audience and build an inclusive religious understanding. In addition, the results of this study are also useful for religious policy makers (such as the Indonesian Ministry of Religion or Islamic organizations) in designing digital campaigns that emphasize the values of tolerance, unity, and anti-radicalism in virtual public spaces.

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