DA'WAH ON SOCIAL MEDIA: THE ISLAMIC ETHICS AND METHODOLOGY

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Abstract

More than pandemic, da'wah administration in today's Nigeria is breeding acrimony, enmity, animosity, and, above all, disunity among the Muslim Community rather than inviting and attracting convincingly new converts into Islam and promoting harmonious peace and socio-religious stability within the Muslim fold and the larger society. Hence, there has been an imminent disconnect between the Islamic-spirited da'wah and the individualistic-motivated da'wah as evident on social media today, particularly among scholars in Southwest Nigeria which constitutes the major focus of this research. The paper therefore investigates how da'wah is being administered via social media, the methodologies being adopted and the end result of such da'wah activities in the society, particularly, their effects on the socio-religious lives of the people. .

Keywords: Da'wah, Social Media, Islamic Ethics, Methodology.

Introduction

Da'wah, an Islamic concept for evangelism or evangelical drive, is a socio-religious duty incumbent on every informed Muslim irrespective of age, race, color or gender (Qur'an 16: 125). The Prophet (S.A.W) buttresses this point, saying: "Convey from me even if it is one verse" (*Balligh 'anni walaw ayah*).

Moreover, of the numerous global outlets which disseminate information very fast and at considerable financial cost are the social media as well as modern technological devices. Laying credence to this, Haidar, Mustari and Fauziah. (2016) submit that da'wah on media constitutes one of the most popular ways of conveying a mass message. They explained further that da'wah on social media offers numerous advantages, such as offering a powerful impact to reach a wide audience. It is a convenient and flexible viewing medium, owing to its widespread popularity and the ease with which a message can reach millions of viewers internationally and nationally.

Social Media, as we may partly borrow from the words of Gittlin (1979), are highly dominating and sophisticated gadgets which occupy a very powerful place in the Nigerian Society so much so that time and attention are no longer completely our own as they dominate human space. Gittlin lamented further, saying:

> *Years ago, 'television has the power to colonize people's consciousness*
> *and unconsciousness. It is said that the television is the window through*
> *which we see the world. However, the world that we see on television is*
> *the one that is shaped by those behind the screen. What we see on television,*
> *what is important and useful for the people, how those things should be framed*
> *are screened through television editorial policies.*

From the above statement, it could be deduced that as useful, educative, informative and entertaining social media are, necessary caution must be applied in their usage lest the society becomes consciously or unconsciously corrupted through misinformation and uncensored da'wah activities that are ill-motivated by unscrupulous and unprofessional da'wah agents.

However, the major thrust of this study is to go extra miles in identifying the noticeable strengths and weaknesses in the conduct and administration of *da'wah,* vis a vis, compliance with the Islamic ethics and Da'wah methodology. It needs to be emphasized, at this juncture, that strategic planning coupled with sincerity of purpose and the fear of Allah *(Ikhlas Niyyah* and *Taqwa-llah)* should form the priority concern of every da'wah practitioner if meaningful result, as envisaged by the Shari'ah, must be achieved.
Perhaps, it is in this vein that Akanni (2020), succinctly defines plan as "deciding in advance what to do, how to do it, when to do it and who is to do it?" Explaining further, Akanni reiterates that strategic planning is a necessary tool that must be used by individuals, corporate organizations as well as governments in setting goals and appropriate means of realizing them.

In specific term, Akanni (2020) quoted Al-Qardawi (1995) in what he called *'necessity of plan'* as thus:

> *It is inevitable to make a plan based on: accurate calculation and exact*
> *figures, profound knowledge of categories of peoples' wants and their place*
> *of priority, available capacity and easier means of having those wants satisfied*
> *as well as anticipation for aspirations.*

From the foregoing analysis therefore, it is definitely not out of point to say that a lot of grey areas in da'wah administration, particularly in this part of the world, needed to be seriously reviewed if da'wah must channel the right and appropriate cause for which it is meant.
In view of the above, the following research questions were formulated to investigate and address the inherent challenges of da'wah in Southwest Nigeria:

Research Question 1: What are the approaches to Da'wah administration in the contemporary Nigerian society?
Research Question 2: What are the attitudes of the people to whom Da'wah is being administered?
Research Question 3: What are the significant impacts of Da'wah on the socio-religious lives of Yoruba Muslims in Southwest Nigeria?
Research Question 4: In what ways can the inherent challenges of Da'wah on social media be solved among Muslim Scholars and Clerics in Yoruba land?

The Challenges of Da'wah
In recent time, quite a number of issues have continuously ensued, generating heat confrontations from among various *Du`at* (Proselytizers) which are definitely not unconnected with ideological differences and or contention for supremacy. This, in clear terms, is certainly against the noble mindset as envisaged by the Shari'ah in an ideal da'wah administration. The Qur'an directs thus:

> *Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have*
> *disputations with them in the best manner; surely your Lord knows those who*
> *go astray from His path, and He knows best those who follow the right way*
> *(An-Nahl, Qur'an 16 verse 125)*

Against this backdrop, it is imperative to highlight some of the awful challenges that are militating against an ideal and spiritually motivated da'wah as stipulated in Islam. These, among other things, include:

i. Lack of sound knowledge of Qur'an and Sunnah.
ii. Cultural interference / interpolation between Islamic culture and indigenous traditions.
iii. Ethnicity and religious bigotry.
iv. Inadequate understanding of the higher intent of the Shari'ah (*Maqasid Shari'ah*)
v. Sectional discrimination and ideological disparity.
vi. Ostentation, pride and social media syndromes

Lack of Sound Islamic knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Prevailing evidences of hate speeches and rancor as publicly demonstrated by some influential Muslim scholars and clerics day by day via social media are clear indices and a strong indication that knowledge and exposure are two different phenomena that have created a wide gap among a host of contemporary Da'wah Administratorrs. It is highly disgusting to see and hear on social media reputable Muslim leaders berating and undermining the condemnable intra-religious verbal wars among Muslim scholars in recent time, Arikewuyo (2020) remarks thus:

> *"Al-Khilaf is considered by the Qur'an as an inevitable manifestation of*
> *Allah's divine sign (Qur'an30:22), condemnation has been launched on*
> *any religious difference that triggers disintegration, disunity and mutual grudge"*

Arikewuyo reiterates his points further by citing Qur'an 3:105, 6:159, 2:176 among others to buttress the condemnation of this unhealthy and unethical rivalry that has almost become a social norm among contemporary Da'wah Ministers. Attributing these social traits to social media pandemonium, Arikewuyo laments thus:

> *With the alarming rate of threat posed by religious disagreement in*
> *contemporary time, which are factored by modernism, technology and*
> *westernization, modern scholars are aroused by renewed vigour into*
> *the subject.*

Cultural interference / interpolation between Islamic culture and indigenous traditions.

It has been observed with dismay that a host of *Du`at*, perhaps for selfish reason or individualistic tendencies, often confuse indigenous traditions with Islamic cultural norms and practices thereby creating contradictory impression about Islam. These have serious negative impact on the conduct of so many adherents of Islam, particularly the followers of these categories of such leaders. It is rather unfortunate, particularly at this age of global technology, that cultural variance, individual interpretations/ interpolations, and linguistic polemics are gradually creating disunity among contemporary da'wah practitioners in Nigeria. Hence, Ash-Shatibi (2003), while lamenting over the menace constituted by ignorance of an established Islamic culture coupled with its existing evidence, remarks thus:
> *Muslim scholars have regarded as a trial (for the Ummah) that an*
> *ignorant should regard or be regarded as a knowledgeable. Thus,*
> *his disagreement will be given weight at the expense of an existing evidence.*

Ethnicity and Religious Bigotry
Ethnicity as well as religious bigotry, to a very large extent, has, over the time, played a disastrous role in the dissemination of information among the Nigerian populace.
People in the field of da'wah are not completely exonerated from this odious practice.

It is not a gainsaying that - aside political and economic crises that Nigeria is currently contending with - ethno-religious challenges are indisputably the bane of insecurity that has persistently paraded Nigeria as a nation. Hence, how this has crept into the pristine Islam and seriously affected da`wah should be extensively discussed until it is laid to a permanent rest. The Prophet (P.B.U.H) was reported to have categorically condemned all forms of religious bigotry in any guise. Jubair b. Mut'im reported the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H) as saying:

> *"he who summons others to party-spirit does not belong to us; and he*
> *who dies upholding party spirit does not belong to us."*
> *[Sunan Abi Dawud 5121. In Book Reference: Book 43, Hadith 349.*
> *English translation: Book 42, Hadith 5102]*

Inadequate understanding of the profound Islamic principles and the higher intent of the Shari'ah (*Maqasid Shari'ah*)
It is highly imperative to recall the two principles that are very fundamental before passing any *fatwah (*religious verdict) in Islam. According to 'Izz bin Abdul-Salam (n.d), the primary aims of *Maqasid Shari'ah* are:
   1. Promotion of the common good and benefit *(Jalb al-Masalih*)
   2. Avoidance and protection from harm (*Dar' al-Mafasid*)

In line with the two principles stated above, it must be stated in clear terms that if one scrutinizes most of the happenings in the contemporary Nigerian society, particularly in the area of da'wah administration and information dissemination via social media, it may be logically concluded that neither of the two objectives above has been meaningfully and appropriately considered, let alone achieved in the least. It may be fascinating to place on record that as numerous as the number of da'wah practitioners keep multiplying by the day, one may wonder to ask if actually there exists anything like da'wah activity in Nigeria of today?

Hence, a purposeful da'wah is that which ultimately leads to the fulfillment of some benefits and that which wards off evils from the society (Shihab al-Din al-Qarafi, 1994).
It is in this vein, that Otunuyi (2015) aptly recommends a 19-point guidelines for potential da'wah practitioners. In his quest for a well-coordinated da'wah with its meaningful attendant result on the religion (Islam), the Muslims and the larger society, Otunuyi (2015) gives an insight into the prerequisites of da'wah ethics as follows:

   1. Adopt attitudinal da'wah as the best da'wah method as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) in Qur'an 33:21, 68:1- 4, 3:159.
   2. Avoid excessive use of Arabic terminologies in addressing non-speakers of Arabic as well as non-Muslim audience.
   3. Always find common ground and speak a common language that will benefit majority, if not all, of your target audience
   4. Always think of what you offer and not necessarily what you gain from da'wah services (Qur'an 71:5 - 20).
   5. Be friendly, fair, firm, polite and respectful in your da'wah presentation (Qur'an 3:159).
   6. Be tactful and don't act like you are better than the people you are giving da'wah.
   7. Clear-up any misconceptions about Islam with convincing evidences from the Qur'an, Sunnah and any reasonable references (Qur'an 16:125, 4:59)
   8. Comport yourself decently so as to command and not to demand respect of your audience.

9. Dress nicely and moderately according to your audience and in conformity with the Shari'ah (Qur'an 7:26).
10. Don't abuse or insult people of other faiths (Qur'an 6:108).
11. Don't be a hypocrite who follows not what he preaches (Qur'an 2:24).
12. Don't confuse religious, cultural and political issues; treat religious matters differently from others.
13. Do not dabble in a subject you don't know much about, so that you don't give wrong answers to questions that your audience might ask. Better still, never feel shy to say: "I don't know" or "I will research further".
14. Educate your audience with comprehensible illustration and practicable experiences, where and when necessary (Qur'an 18:32- 44, 45 – 55).
15. Encourage a "Dialogue-Like" Da'wah and not a "Monologue-Like" type (Qur'an 42:38).
16. Evaluate your da'wah by creating a session for questions and answers where purposeful ideas and intellectual interactions could be exchanged (Qur'an 16:43 - 44).
17. Focus your da'wah on the immediate need of your audience and the larger society.
18. Follow-up your da'wah by giving additional attention to those who may wish to learn more from your wealth of experience.
19. In conclusion, preach peace, and follow-up peace in a peaceful manner, so that your da'wah will be meaningfully appreciated.

Sectional Discrimination and Ideological Disparity.

According to Arikewuyo (2020), Muslim groups in Yorubaland are classified into two categories: the traditionalists and the revivalists. While the activities of the former were dominantly filled with (*takhl*it) syncretism, the latter assiduously attempted to demarcate, through da'wah activities, between the prevailing practice of syncretism among the Yoruba Muslims and the real, incorrupt Islam. It is worthy of note, therefore, that sectionalism and ideological differences among various traditional Muslim groups have dealt a great deal with the unity and harmonious coexistence of the Muslim Ummah. In the same vein, one could also admit that a host of the so-called revivalist groups of nowadays do demonstrate (*ghuluwwu*) extremism in their da'wah activities. Perhaps, this accounts for why Arikewuyo submits that:

> *It is note-worthy that the doctrinal differences among the Muslim groups in Yorubaland, although, have rarely led to physical clashes and attacks, there is no doubt that they have fanned the ember of mutual grudge, enmity and non-cordial relationship among the Muslims. Indent properly.*

Ostentation, Pride and Social Media Syndromes

Almost on daily basis, like the five obligatory daily prayers, Da'wah Ministers from diverse Muslim sects and organizations, *Madaris* (Arabic & Islamic Schools) as well as individuals, do arbitrarily go on air to showcase - in the name of da'wah - their whims, prejudices and caprices. Quite devastating, in this regard, is the influx of novices, who neither attended Madrasah nor conventional institution, but yet, would pose as Muslim scholars only to deceive the unsuspecting masses on issues that portray Islam negatively. It is not surprising to say that social media enjoy more patronage than both *Madrasah* and *Masjid* (Islamic School and Mosque*)*. In fact, one could reliably admit that perhaps like *Ka'bah* (the sacred Mosque in Makkah), social media constitute the focal point and, indeed, the major focus of most da'wah practitioners in the contemporary Nigerian Society. Whereas, the Qur'an condemns ostentatious practices, boastfulness and arrogance in all ramifications, saying:

And turn not your face away from men with pride, nor work with insolence through the earth. Verily, Allah likes not any arrogant boaster. And be moderate in your walking, and lower your voice, verily, the harshest of all voices is the voice of the donkey. (al-Isra', Qur'an 17: 18-19)

Questionnaire on the Approaches to Da'wah and their Outcomes

In addressing the subject matter of this study, it is quite expedient to highlight its specific objectives as follows:

i. To assess the methodology / appropriateness of the approaches to Da'wah administration in the contemporary Nigerian society
ii. To examine the acceptability or otherwise of the messages of Da'wah to Nigerian populace
iii. To investigate the significant impact of Da'wah on the socio-religious lives of Yoruba Muslims in Southwest Nigeria
iv. To offer research-based solutions to the inherent challenges of Da'wah administration among Muslim Scholars and Clerics in Yorubaland

However, for effectiveness and efficiency in administration and result-oriented da'wah, the following questions are presented to a cross-section of the study population to investigate their take on the germane issues raised in this research. The questions so formulated for this purpose are as follows:

1. What are the approaches to Da'wah administration in the contemporary Nigerian society?
2. What are the attitudes of the people to whom Da'wah is being administered?
3. What are the significant impacts of Da'wah on the socio-religious lives of Yoruba Muslims in Southwest Nigeria?
4. In what ways can the inherent challenges of Da'wah on social media be solved among Muslim Scholars and Clerics in Yorubaland?

Methodology

The research work adopted quantitative approach, focuses on a cross-section of Da'wah Practitioners among Yoruba Muslim Scholars and Clerics who carry out da'wah frequently via social media. The population, randomly selected, covers Lagos, Ogun and part of Oyo States in Southwest Nigeria. The sample of 100 respondents was carefully selected from the study population on the basis of 40, 40 and 20 respectively. The questionnaires were electronically distributed and retrieved via internet. 4 items of self-developed questionnaire were formulated and used as instruments for data collection. The instruments were presented to Islamic experts for validation before being put to use. Simple percentage was used in analyzing the data so collected from the respondents.

A questionnaire tagged "Da'wah Methodology on Social Media" (DMSM) was distributed among the respondents who were necessarily Muslims and of Yoruba ethnicity. The "DMSM" questionnaire seeks respondents' opinions about Da'wah methodologies/ strategies and their resultant infractions within the Muslims, particularly among some Muslim Clerics and their followership in Yorubaland.

Results and Discussions of Findings

Research Question 1: What are the approaches to Da'wah administration in the contemporary Nigerian society?

To answer the question, respondents were requested to respond to the questionnaire item on whether Da'wah was spiritually oriented or otherwise.

Finding from this question is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Responses to the item: **"Da'wah is spiritually oriented to attract new converts into Islam"**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
No	75	75%
Yes	25	25%
Total	100	100%

 75 respondents representing 75% of the total sample population responded "NO" to the question while 25 respondents representing 25% responded "YES". Therefore, finding revealed that da'wah is not spiritually oriented to facilitate new converts into the Islamic fold. Hence, the need for constant training and orientation for both the existing and potential da'wah practitioners should be given a priority concern.

Research Question 2: What are the attitudes of the people to whom Da'wah is being administered?

Respondents were requested to respond to the item on whether the attitudes of the people to whom da'wah is being administered were positive or negative.

Finding from this question is presented in Table 2 below:

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Negative	**85**	**85%**
Positive	**15**	**15%**
Total	**100**	**100%**

Table 2. Responses to the item: **"Peoples attitude to Da'wah is religiously favored and morally motivated" (Yes or No)**

85 respondents representing 85% of the total sample population responded negatively with "NO" while 15 respondents representing 15% responded positively with "YES". Therefore, finding showed that the attitudes of the people to whom da'wah is being administered were negative. Hence, the prevailing cases of lawlessness and anarchy in Nigerian society.

Research Question 3: What are the significant impacts of Da'wah on the socio-religious lives of Yoruba Muslims in Southwest Nigeria?

To answer the question, respondents were requested to respond to the questionnaire item on whether Da'wah actually has commendable impacts on the socio-religious lives of Yoruba Muslims in Southwest Nigeria or not.

Finding from the question is presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Responses to the item**: "Most Da'wah activities on social media in recent time are the major causes of social violence and disunity among the Muslim Community" (Yes or No)**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	90	90%
No	10	10%
Total	100	100%

90 respondents representing 90% of the total sample population gave "YES" for an answer while 10 respondents representing 10% gave "NO" for an answer. Therefore, finding revealed that most da'wah activities on social media, in recent time, constitute the major causes of social violence and disunity among the Muslim Community. Hence, exchange of hate speeches, rains of abusive words and use of vulgar statements became rampant among Muslim scholars and clerics.

Research Question 4: In what ways can the inherent challenges of Da'wah on social media be solved among Muslim Scholars and Clerics in Yoruba land?

To answer the question, respondents were requested to respond to the questionnaire item on the religious ways and manners by which social harmony and religious tolerance via da'wah could be restored among Muslim Scholars, Clerics and their followers in Yorubaland.

Finding from the question is presented in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Responses to the item: **"Understanding and adoption of the fundamental principles of *Maqasid Shari'ah* (the higher intents of the Islamic Law) is sacrosanct to Da'wah" (Yes or No)**

Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	**95**	**95%**
No	**05**	**05%**
Total	**100**	**100%**

95 respondents representing 95% of the total sample population gave "YES" for an answer while 5 respondents representing 5% gave "NO" for an answer. Therefore, finding showed that understanding and adoption of the fundamental principles of *Maqasid Shari'ah* (the higher intents of the Islamic Law) is sacrosanct to da'wah in order that the Islamic mindset for da'wah will be materialized and decorum sustained.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is quite apparent from the foregoing discussion that the real import of da'wah as lucidly enunciated in the Qur'an 16 verse 125 has not only been ridiculed but consciously or unconsciously misconstrued in recent time by some Muslim scholars and clerics on account of polemics and inadequate exposure to Islamic ideals. The study has identified six deficiencies that often count for maladministration of da'wah in the contemporary Nigerian society, especially among a few supposedly Yoruba elites in Southwest Nigeria. It is quite expedient therefore to, as a matter of necessity, appeal to all Islamic sects, in any nomenclature, to revert to the (*Maqasid Shari'ah*) while implementing the constitutionality of Qur'an and Sunnah as the primary and most reliable sources of Islamic Law. In conclusion therefore, this study calls for a sincere reflection on the underlying principles that form the nitty-gritty of da'wah as asserted in Otunuyi (2015). It also calls for rumination on the submission of Akanni (2020) which says "every religion has rituals to perform, formulas to recite, tales to narrate, objects to manipulate, places to frequent or avoid, holy days to keep, natural phenomena by which to predict the future, charismatic leaders to follow, truth to affirm, a literature to ponder and precepts to obey. Islam is no exception of these. It has a list of "dos" and "don'ts" codified into the legal component of its value system called the *Shari'ah*".

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