



Persuasive Strategies in Ustadz Abdul Somad's Sermon on the Official YouTube Channel: An Aristotelian Rhetorical Analysis

Saddam Hakki¹, Rita Gamasari^{2*}, Firgi Nurdiansyah¹, Andi Putra³

¹ Department of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting, STAI Al Hikmah Pariangan, Batusangkar, West Sumatera, Indonesia

² Department of Arabic Language and Literature, STAIN Mandailing Natal, Panyabungan, North Sumatera, Indonesia

³ Department of Informatics, Sekolah Tinggi Teknologi Payakumbuh, West Sumatera, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze persuasive strategies in a sermon delivered through the YouTube account of Ustadz Abdul Somad using the Aristotelian rhetorical framework, which encompasses ethos, pathos, and logos. The object of analysis focuses on a sermon entitled "*The Meaning and Wisdom of Commemorating the Birthday of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)*" broadcast on his official YouTube channel, which garnered 152,154 views, premiered on September 23, 2024, and has a duration of 1 hour, 5 minutes, and 48 seconds. This research employs a qualitative-descriptive approach using a case study method. Data were obtained from the sermon transcript and analyzed through content analysis techniques to identify forms of the preacher's credibility (ethos), strategies for managing audience emotions through humor and narrative (pathos), and patterns of rational argumentation based on the Qur'an and Hadith (logos). The findings indicate that the effectiveness of his digital da'wah is constructed through a balanced integration of these three rhetorical elements, enabling religious messages to be conveyed in a persuasive, contextual, and rational manner to the audience, thereby affirming the relevance of Aristotelian rhetorical theory as an effective analytical framework for examining Islamic preaching in the era of digital media.

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology has fundamentally transformed the landscape of religious communication in the contemporary era. The proliferation of digital platforms, particularly social media, has opened unprecedented opportunities for religious preachers to disseminate their messages beyond the constraints of physical space and time (Nasrullah, 2015). Among the various digital platforms available today, YouTube stands out as one of the most dominant and widely utilized media for the distribution of Islamic religious content. According to the We Are Social and Hootsuite Digital Report (2023), Indonesia ranks among the

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: ritagamasari@gmail.com

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countries with the highest number of YouTube users globally, making this platform a highly strategic medium for the propagation of Islamic teachings and values.

Within this digital religious landscape, Ustadz Abdul Somad (UAS) has emerged as one of the most influential and widely followed Islamic preachers in Indonesia. His official YouTube channel has successfully attracted millions of subscribers and generated an extraordinarily high volume of video views across a diverse range of religious topics. The remarkable popularity of UAS in the digital sphere is largely attributed to his ability to combine profound religious scholarship with a communicative style that is articulate, engaging, and accessible to audiences from various educational and social backgrounds (Wahid, 2019). This phenomenon positions his YouTube lectures as a compelling and academically significant object of study, particularly from the perspectives of communication science and rhetoric.

Rhetoric, as the academic discipline concerned with the art of persuasive communication, traces its origins to ancient Greece. Aristotle, in his foundational work *Rhetorica*, formulated a comprehensive theory of rhetoric that remains highly relevant for analyzing persuasive communication in both classical and contemporary contexts (Aristotle, trans. Roberts, 2004). Aristotle identified three principal modes of persuasion: *ethos*, which refers to the credibility and moral character of the speaker; *pathos*, which denotes the emotional appeal directed toward the audience; and *logos*, which encompasses the logical and rational dimensions of argumentation. These three elements function interdependently and synergistically to construct messages capable of influencing the audience's beliefs, emotions, and actions in accordance with the communicator's intentions (Corbett & Connors, 1999). The enduring relevance of the Aristotelian rhetorical framework in modern communication studies has been affirmed by numerous scholars, including Rapp (2010), who argues that Aristotle's theory of rhetoric remains the most comprehensive and foundational framework for the study of persuasion to this day.

The application of Aristotelian rhetorical analysis to the context of Islamic preaching (*dakwah*) represents a meaningful interdisciplinary endeavor that bridges classical rhetoric, communication theory, and Islamic studies. *Dakwah*, at its core, is an act of persuasive communication aimed at inviting individuals toward goodness, truth, and the values of Islamic teachings, as articulated in the Qur'an, Surah An-Nahl (16:125), which commands the faithful to call others to the way of their Lord with wisdom, good admonition, and courteous dialogue. From a communication science perspective, *dakwah* shares fundamental characteristics with persuasive communication, as both endeavors seek to influence the attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral dispositions of the audience (Ilaihi, 2010). This conceptual alignment strongly suggests the suitability of the Aristotelian framework as an analytical lens through which the persuasive strategies embedded in Islamic preaching can be systematically examined.

A review of existing literature reveals that scholarly inquiry into rhetoric and persuasion within the domain of Islamic digital communication, while growing, remains limited in scope and depth. Aisyah (2020) analyzed the persuasive linguistic strategies employed by prominent Indonesian preachers and found that the use of metaphor, analogy, and narrative storytelling constituted dominant rhetorical devices for establishing emotional proximity with audiences. Similarly, Hasan (2021) examined *dakwah* communication strategies on social media platforms and concluded that the communicator's credibility, corresponding to the Aristotelian concept of *ethos*, served as the most critical determinant of message acceptance among digital audiences. However, studies that rigorously and comprehensively apply the Aristotelian rhetorical framework to the analysis of YouTube-based *dakwah* content remain conspicuously scarce, thereby constituting a significant academic gap that warrants systematic scholarly investigation.

This research is significant on both theoretical and practical levels. Theoretically, it contributes to the advancement of rhetorical and communication studies by applying a classical analytical framework to a contemporary digital communication phenomenon, thereby demonstrating the cross-temporal applicability of Aristotelian rhetoric (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). Practically, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a valuable reference for preachers, religious communicators, and content creators in designing more effective, persuasive, and impactful messages in the age of digital media. Furthermore, this research bears relevance to the broader discourse on media literacy, as it equips audiences with a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which persuasion operates within the religious content they routinely consume on digital platforms (Potter, 2016).

Based on the foregoing background, this study aims to identify and analyze the employment of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* in the lectures delivered by Ustadz Abdul Somad on his official YouTube channel. Through the lens of Aristotelian rhetorical analysis, this research seeks to provide a systematic and theoretically grounded contribution to the study of dakwah communication in the digital era, while simultaneously offering practical insights for religious communicators striving to enhance the persuasive efficacy and reach of their messages in an increasingly digitalized world.

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach using rhetorical analysis to examine persuasive strategies in the Maulid of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sermon delivered by Ustadz Abdul Somad. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research focuses on in-depth interpretation and meaning-making of the da'wah message, particularly on how the elements of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* are constructed in oral communication practices. The descriptive method is used to systematically describe the rhetorical patterns that emerge in the sermon without manipulating the research object (Creswell, 2018).

The object of the study is a single sermon video on the theme of the Maulid of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), published on the Ustadz Abdul Somad Official YouTube channel under the title "The Meaning and Wisdom of Commemorating the Birthday of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)." The video is accessible via the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xcQs0V11I8>. It premiered on September 23, 2024, has a duration of 1 hour, 5 minutes, and 48 seconds, and had been viewed more than 152,154 times at the time this research was conducted. The selection of this video was based on thematic considerations (the Maulid of the Prophet as a central issue in Islamic da'wah), its broad audience reach, and the fact that not all Muslim congregations agree with the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, as some consider it an innovation (*bid'ah*). In this YouTube sermon, Ustadz Abdul Somad explains to the congregation that commemorating the Maulid of the Prophet (PBUH) is a virtuous practice and not prohibited in Islam.

Data collection was conducted through documentation, namely by transcribing the sermon verbatim from the YouTube video. Secondary data were obtained from academic literature, including books and scholarly journals discussing Aristotelian rhetoric, persuasive communication, and contemporary da'wah. Data analysis was carried out using qualitative content analysis by classifying segments of the sermon into categories of *ethos* (the preacher's credibility and authority), *pathos* (emotional appeal and narrative), and *logos* (rational argumentation and use of scriptural evidence). Data validity was strengthened through theoretical triangulation by comparing the analytical findings with classical rhetorical theory and modern communication theory, thereby producing a comprehensive and academically valid understanding (Aristotle, 2007; Foss et al., 2014; Miles & Huberman, 2018).

3. Result

3.1 Aristotelian Rhetoric: Analysis of Ethos in Ustadz Abdul Somad's Da'wah on YouTube

In Aristotelian rhetoric, ethos refers to the credibility of the speaker, which constitutes the primary foundation of persuasive success. Aristotle emphasizes that audiences tend to accept a message not merely because of the strength of its arguments, but because of their trust in the speaker's character, competence, and goodwill (Aristotle, 2007). In the context of digital da'wah, ethos becomes increasingly important because audiences do not interact directly with the preacher; rather, they assess authority through communicative performance, scholarly references, and message consistency. The Maulid of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sermon delivered by Ustadz Abdul Somad on YouTube demonstrates how ethos is strongly constructed through a combination of scholarly reputation, mastery of content, and a convincing communication style.

Ustadz Abdul Somad's scholarly credibility is evident in his command of authoritative Islamic sources presented in the sermon. In explaining the meaning and wisdom of the Maulid, he consistently refers to Qur'anic verses, Prophetic hadith, and the opinions of classical scholars relevant to the theme of love for the Prophet. The citation of scriptural evidence and classical Islamic texts (turath) is delivered accurately and contextually, reinforcing the audience's perception that the message carries strong scholarly legitimacy. According to McCroskey (2015), competence and knowledge are central components of ethos, as audiences are more likely to accept messages from figures regarded as experts in their field.

Beyond scholarship, his ethos is also constructed through the personal character displayed in the sermon. His straightforward and simple delivery style, interspersed with light humor, creates an impression of humility and emotional closeness with the congregation. In this Maulid sermon, he does not position himself as an elitist figure but rather as a preacher who understands the social realities of the Muslim community. This approach aligns with the Aristotelian concept of *eunoia*—the speaker's goodwill toward the audience—reflected in the effort to convey messages with empathy and concern (Aristotle, 2007).

Ethos is further strengthened by the moderate stance he demonstrates when addressing the often-debated issue of commemorating the Prophet's birthday. Instead of adopting a confrontational tone, he emphasizes the substance of love for Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) rather than engaging solely in formal legal debates. This reflects *arete* (moral virtue), namely integrity and wisdom in responding to differences of opinion within the Muslim community. Such moderation fosters psychological comfort among the audience and enhances trust in the preacher's moral authority (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 2014).

Thus, the analysis of ethos in this Maulid sermon shows that the persuasive power of his da'wah rests not only on the content of the message but also on systematically constructed credibility. His ethos is shaped through scholarly mastery, humble personal character, and moderation in conveying religious teachings. These findings affirm that in digital da'wah, ethos serves as a strategic element bridging Islamic scholarly authority with universal rhetorical principles, enabling religious messages to be widely and sustainably received in modern society (Kennedy, 1999).

3.2 Aristotelian Rhetoric: Analysis of Pathos in Ustadz Abdul Somad's Da'wah on YouTube

In Aristotelian rhetorical theory, pathos refers to the speaker's ability to evoke the audience's emotions as a means of persuasion. Aristotle asserts that emotions such as love, hope, fear, and empathy play a crucial role in shaping listeners' attitudes and decisions (Aristotle, 2007). In the context of da'wah, pathos becomes strategic because religious messages require not only rational understanding but also emotional engagement. The Maulid sermon delivered by Ustadz Abdul

Somad on YouTube demonstrates an intensive use of pathos to cultivate love and spiritual closeness toward the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The use of historical narratives and exemplary stories of the Prophet serves as a primary instrument in evoking audience emotions. In the sermon, he vividly describes the struggles, character, and compassion of the Prophet in language that is lively and easily visualized. This narrative approach effectively generates feelings of admiration and emotional resonance, allowing the audience not only to understand the conceptual meaning of the Maulid but also to experience it emotionally. Foss, Foss, and Trapp (2014) argue that narrative is a powerful instrument of pathos because it connects messages with the audience's inner experiences.

Pathos is also constructed through expressive and communicative language style. He frequently employs dynamic intonation, simple yet touching diction, and religious humor relevant to the congregation's daily life. This humor functions not merely as entertainment but as an emotional bridge that creates a relaxed atmosphere and fosters closeness to the da'wah message. McCroskey (2015) notes that emotional engagement increases when speakers create a warm and inclusive communicative climate.

Furthermore, pathos appears in the reflective appeals he directs to the audience. He does not merely encourage annual ritual commemoration but invites listeners to reflect on the depth of their love for Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in everyday life. Through rhetorical questions and calls for self-introspection (*muhasabah*), he evokes feelings of longing, humility, and hope to become better members of the *ummah*. This strategy aligns with the Aristotelian notion of pathos as a means of influencing attitudes through emotional engagement (Kennedy, 1999).

Therefore, pathos functions as a central force in internalizing the Maulid message among the audience. Through inspiring narratives, expressive language, religious humor, and reflective appeals, he successfully establishes a deep emotional bond between the congregation and the da'wah message. These findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of digital da'wah depends not only on scriptural evidence (*logos*) and preacher credibility (*ethos*), but also on the ethical and constructive management of audience emotions, as emphasized in Aristotelian rhetorical tradition (Aristotle, 2007).

3.3 Aristotelian Rhetoric: Analysis of Logos in Ustadz Abdul Somad's Da'wah on YouTube

From an Aristotelian perspective, *logos* represents the persuasive element grounded in rational argumentation, logical reasoning, and systematic presentation of evidence. Aristotle positions *logos* as the intellectual foundation ensuring that a message not only stirs emotion but also appeals to reason (Aristotle, 2007). In Islamic da'wah, *logos* plays a vital role because religious teachings require rational comprehension supported by textual evidence, argumentation, and contextual explanation. The Maulid sermon delivered by Ustadz Abdul Somad on YouTube illustrates consistent use of *logos* to explain the meaning and wisdom of the commemoration in an argumentative and structured manner.

The application of *logos* is evident in the organization of arguments based on Qur'anic verses, hadith, and the opinions of classical and contemporary scholars. He does not merely present normative claims about the importance of commemorating the Prophet's birthday but systematically elaborates on its theological and historical foundations. The explanation of love for the Prophet is connected with logical scriptural reasoning, guiding the audience to understand that the Maulid is not merely a cultural tradition but possesses rational grounding within Islamic teachings. Kennedy (1999) states that *logos* strengthens persuasive legitimacy through arguments that can be rationally examined.

Logos is further reinforced through clear cause-and-effect reasoning. In the sermon, he explains the relationship between love for the Prophet and the moral quality of Muslims, arguing that emulating the Prophet directly influences social behavior, such as honesty, compassion, and moral responsibility. Such logical reasoning helps the audience grasp the practical implications of commemorating the Maulid in everyday life. Foss, Foss, and Trapp (2014) assert that arguments demonstrating logical consequences enhance persuasive power.

The use of concrete examples and everyday analogies also constitutes an important component of his logos strategy. He frequently connects religious concepts with familiar social realities, such as family relationships, community life, and contemporary moral challenges. These examples function as empirical illustrations that clarify abstract arguments, making the da'wah message more comprehensible and acceptable. In modern rhetorical theory, this approach is regarded as effective logos because it bridges normative concepts with lived experiences (McCroskey, 2015).

In conclusion, logos in this Maulid sermon serves as the rational pillar that strengthens the religious message. Argumentation grounded in scriptural evidence, cause-and-effect reasoning, and concrete examples demonstrates that his digital da'wah does not rely solely on emotional appeal (pathos) and personal credibility (ethos), but is also built upon a systematic logical framework. These findings reaffirm the relevance of Aristotelian rhetorical theory in analyzing contemporary da'wah, particularly within digital media contexts that demand clarity, rationality, and accountability of messages (Aristotle, 2007).

4. Conclusions

This study concludes that the persuasive strategies employed in the sermon of Ustadz Abdul Somad on his official YouTube channel, Ustadz Abdul Somad Official (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xcQs0VI118>), are clearly constructed through a balanced integration of ethos, pathos, and logos as formulated in Aristotelian rhetoric. Ethos is reflected in his scholarly credibility, moral authority, and consistent moderate stance, which collectively foster audience trust in the da'wah message conveyed. Pathos is manifested through the use of religious humor, narratives of the exemplary life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and reflective appeals that evoke positive emotions and encourage affective engagement among the congregation. Meanwhile, logos is demonstrated through systematic rational argumentation grounded in the Qur'an, Hadith, and scholarly opinions, further strengthened by contextual examples relevant to the social realities of the audience. The synergy of these three elements renders his da'wah not only informative but also persuasive and transformative.

Overall, the findings affirm that Aristotelian rhetorical theory remains highly relevant for analyzing contemporary Islamic da'wah practices, particularly within the context of digital media. The da'wah of Ustadz Abdul Somad represents a model of religious communication that is adaptive to technological developments while remaining rooted in the Islamic scholarly tradition. This research contributes theoretically by expanding the application of Western rhetorical studies in da'wah scholarship and offers practical contributions for preachers and public communicators in designing credible, empathetic, and rational da'wah strategies. Thus, digital da'wah functions not merely as a medium for disseminating religious messages but also as a means of shaping understanding, attitudes, and moderate Islamic consciousness within the dynamics of modern society.

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