

Expressing Four Humour Techniques in Gus Miftah's Dakwahtainment Activities on YouTube

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Abstract

Studies on humor in dakwahtainment have largely focused on its rhetorical function in attracting audiences or explaining laughter through the perspectives of Superiority Theory, Incongruity Theory, and Benign Violation Theory. These perspectives, however, have paid limited attention to how humor is constructed as a communication strategy within contemporary digital preaching. This study aims to examine the forms of humor employed by Gus Miftah and to explain the mechanisms through which such humor is constructed using Arthur Asa Berger's humor techniques framework. The study adopted a qualitative approach using a qualitative content analysis design. The data consisted of seven YouTube sermons delivered by Gus Miftah, which were purposively selected based on the intensity of humorous content, the diversity of preaching themes, and the representation of his communication style. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, while interpretation was guided by Arthur Asa Berger's humor framework, which classifies humor into the dimensions of logic, identity, language, and action. The findings reveal four dominant forms of humor: fictional storytelling in preaching, laughable misfortune, surprising twists, and joking through swearing. These forms demonstrate that humor is constructed through the combination of multiple communication techniques that manage audience expectations, foster social closeness, and sustain audience engagement in the delivery of religious messages. This study contributes to the literature on dakwahtainment by repositioning humor not merely as a rhetorical style or a trigger of laughter, but as a systematically constructed communication strategy within contemporary digital preaching.

Abstrak

Kajian mengenai humor dalam dakwahtainment masih didominasi oleh penjelasan mengenai fungsi humor sebagai daya tarik retorik maupun penyebab munculnya tawa melalui perspektif Superiority Theory, Incongruity Theory, dan Benign Violation Theory. Pendekatan tersebut belum menjelaskan bagaimana humor dikonstruksi sebagai strategi komunikasi dalam praktik dakwah digital. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bentuk-bentuk humor yang digunakan Gus Miftah serta menjelaskan mekanisme konstruksi humor tersebut melalui perspektif teknik humor Arthur Asa Berger. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain qualitative content analysis. Data berupa tujuh video ceramah Gus Miftah di YouTube dipilih secara purposif berdasarkan intensitas penggunaan humor, keragaman tema dakwah, dan representasi gaya komunikasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña, sedangkan interpretasi dilakukan melalui kerangka teknik humor Arthur Asa Berger yang mengelompokkan humor ke dalam dimensi logika, identitas, bahasa, dan tindakan. Penelitian ini menemukan empat bentuk utama humor, yaitu cerita fiksi dalam



dakwah, kemandirian yang layak ditertawakan, kejutan yang memancing tawa, dan bercanda sambil mengumpat. Keempat bentuk tersebut menunjukkan bahwa humor dikonstruksi melalui kombinasi berbagai teknik komunikasi yang mengelola ekspektasi, membangun kedekatan sosial, serta mempertahankan keterlibatan audiens dalam penyampaian pesan-pesan keagamaan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan kajian dakwahtainment dengan menempatkan humor bukan sebagai gaya retorika atau sekadar penyebab munculnya tawa, melainkan sebagai strategi komunikasi yang dikonstruksi secara sistematis dalam praktik dakwah digital.

Keywords Dakwahtainment; Humor; Arthur Asa Berger; Communication Strategy; Gus Miftah

Introduction

The rapid development of digital media has fundamentally transformed the practice of religious communication.¹ This transformation has not only altered the channels through which religious teachings are disseminated but has also generated scholarly debates concerning how digital spaces reconfigure religious authority, reshape interactions between preachers and audiences, and influence the communication strategies employed to sustain the relevance of religious messages in the public sphere.² As digital platforms have increasingly become prominent venues for Islamic preaching (da'wah), religious communication now takes place within an increasingly competitive media environment.³ These developments have encouraged the emergence of new models of religious communication that integrate educational, persuasive, entertaining, and participatory functions to adapt *da'wah* to the evolving digital media landscape.⁴ Accordingly, the rise of digital media has transformed not only the ways in which religion is communicated but also the processes through which religious messages are produced, negotiated, and received within contemporary society.⁵

One notable response to these transformations is the emergence of dakwahtainment,⁶ a model of Islamic religious communication that integrates the delivery of religious teachings

¹ Julia Müller and Thomas N. Friemel, "Dynamics of Digital Media Use in Religious Communities—A Theoretical Model," *Religions* 15, no. 7 (2024): 762, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15070762>.

² Ismaael AlMazaedh et al., "Digital Religion in Platform Societies: Authority, Mediation, and Social Cohesion in Algorithmic Publics (2010–2025)," *Frontiers in Sociology* 11 (April 2026): 1802281, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2026.1802281>.

³ Mohammad 'Ulyan, "Digital Da'wah and Religious Authority: A Narrative Review of Islamic Preaching in the Social Media Era," *Sinergi International Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 3 (2023): 100–113, <https://doi.org/10.61194/ijis.v1i3.591>.

⁴ Muhammad Thahir, "Da'wah and the Dynamics of Modern Communication," *Al-Ulum* 23, no. 1 (2023): 74–90, <https://doi.org/10.30603/au.v23i1.3484>; Johari Muis, "Peran Media YouTube Masjid Al-Irsyad Surabaya Sebagai Strategi Komunikasi Dakwah Di Era Digital," *PROGRESIF: Jurnal Dakwah, Sosial, Dan Komunikasi* 2, no. 2 (2025): 61–76, <https://doi.org/10.63199/progresif.v2i2.36>.

⁵ Stig Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: Theorising Religion, Media and Social Change," *Culture and Religion* 12, no. 2 (2011): 119–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2011.579719>.

⁶ A combination of two words: 'da'wa', meaning the call to Islamic values, and 'tainment', derived from English and referring to entertainment. See: Andayani Andayani and Bobby Rachman Santoso, "Unification of

with elements of entertainment to enhance communication effectiveness and audience engagement.⁷ In Indonesia, this practice has deep historical roots. The spread of Islam during the era of the *Walisongo*, particularly through the missionary activities of Sunan Kalijaga, employed cultural media such as *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet theatre) and *gamelan* as communication instruments that bridged Islamic teachings with the socio-cultural realities of local communities.⁸ The rise of digital media, particularly YouTube, has subsequently transformed dakwahtainment into a more dynamic form of religious communication,⁹ as sermons are no longer consumed solely by audiences attending religious gatherings in person but are continuously reproduced, shared, commented upon, and accessed across temporal and geographical boundaries.¹⁰ Within this digital environment, humor has emerged as an increasingly prominent communication strategy because it captures audience attention, eases communicative interaction, fosters emotional connection, and facilitates the delivery of religious messages.¹¹ One preacher who has consistently employed this strategy is Gus Miftah, whose YouTube sermons combine humor with the dissemination of Islamic teachings. His distinctive preaching style provides a compelling empirical case for examining how humor functions as a communication strategy within contemporary dakwahtainment.¹²

The selection of Gus Miftah as the empirical case is grounded in the distinctive characteristics of his preaching communication, which consistently employs humor as an integral component of delivering religious messages.¹³ Unlike the incidental use of humor commonly found in many religious sermons, humor in Gus Miftah's preaching is systematically integrated into storytelling, everyday language, and spontaneous interaction,

Humor in Da'wah : Da'wah Bil-Lisan KH. Anwar Zahid," *Dakwah: Jurnal Kajian Dakwah Dan Kemasyarakatan* 27, no. 2 (2023): 244–60, <https://doi.org/10.15408/dakwah.v27i2.36747>.

⁷ Tika Mutia, "Da'wahtainment: The Creativity of Muslim Creators in Da'wah Communication on Social Media," *Jurnal Dakwah Risalah* 32, no. 2 (2022): 147, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jdr.v32i2.15536>.

⁸ Hifni Nasif and May Putri Wilujeng, "Wayang as Da'wah Medium of Islam According to Sunan Kalijaga," *KALIMAH* 16, no. 2 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.21111/klm.v16i2.2871>.

⁹ Rizki Briandana et al., "Da'wah Communication and Social Media: The Interpretation of Millennials in Southeast Asia," *International Journal of Economics and Business Administration* VIII, no. Special Issue 1 (2020): 216–26, <https://doi.org/10.35808/ijeba/543>.

¹⁰ Sabil Mokodenseho et al., "Revitalizing Da'wah through YouTube: Toward a Digitally Literate Society," *West Science Islamic Studies* 2, no. 02 (2024): 129–35, <https://doi.org/10.58812/wsiss.v2i02.842>.

¹¹ Andayani and Santoso, "Unification of Humor in Da'wah"; Mustofa Hilmi, "Humor Dalam Pesan Dakwah," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 38, no. 1 (2019): 87, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jid.v38.1.3972>.

¹² Uswatun Hasanah, "Kontroversi Orasi Kebangsaan Gus Miftah Di Gereja Gethel Indonesia (GBI) Penjaringan Jakarta Utara (Analisis Dakwah Dan New Media)," *An-Nida : Jurnal Komunikasi Islam* 13, no. 2 (2021): 123–32, <https://doi.org/10.34001/an-nida.v13i2.2092>; Muslimin Ritonga and Dewi Sartina, "Komunikasi Dakwah Gus Miftah Di Lokalisasi Pasar Kembang Yogyakarta," *Al-MUNZIR* 13, no. 2 (2020): 273, <https://doi.org/10.31332/am.v13i2.2051>.

¹³ Zida Zakiyatul Husna, "Dakwah Multikultural (Dakwah Gus Miftah Di Diskotik Hingga Gereja)," *Hikmah* 15, no. 2 (2021): 246, <https://doi.org/10.24952/hik.v15i2.4056>.

thereby forming a distinctive style of da'wah.¹⁴ This communication strategy is employed not only in conventional religious gatherings but also in outreach to social groups that have traditionally received limited attention in Islamic preaching, including nightlife entertainment workers, former gang members, and other marginalized communities.¹⁵ The same communicative approach is consistently reproduced through his YouTube channel, enabling religious messages to reach broader audiences while fostering sustained interaction and engagement within the digital public sphere.¹⁶

The growing body of scholarship on dakwahtainment reveals several major directions in the academic understanding of this phenomenon. Early studies primarily conceptualized dakwahtainment as an adaptation of Islamic communication to the expansion of modern media by integrating religious preaching with elements of entertainment. Within this perspective, da'wah is no longer delivered solely through conventional sermons but is packaged into more communicative formats, including interactive dialogue, inspirational storytelling, motivational discourse, music, and humor, thereby enabling religious messages to reach wider audiences through television and digital media.¹⁷ This trend is exemplified by prominent Indonesian preachers such as Aa Gym and Mamah Dedeh, who successfully established accessible forms of religious communication by combining Islamic sermons with entertainment in popular television programs.¹⁸ Subsequent scholarship shifted attention toward the relationship between media and religious authority. These studies argue that media function not merely as channels for disseminating religious messages but also as mechanisms for constructing new forms of religious authority through public image-making, personal branding, strategic use of communication technologies, and expanded audience outreach. This development has given rise to concepts such as televangelists and tele-da'i, referring to popular religious preachers whose legitimacy is increasingly shaped through media exposure, while traditional Islamic scholars simultaneously adapt to the evolving

¹⁴ Taufikin Taufikin et al., "Da'wah in the TikTok Era: Analyzing Gus Miftah's Rhetoric, Controversy, and Community Character Education Impact," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 45, no. 1 (2025): 87–106, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jid.v45.1.25646>.

¹⁵ Ritonga and Sartina, "Komunikasi Dakwah Gus Miftah Di Lokalisasi Pasar Kembang Yogyakarta"; Siti Mariyam, "Gaya Bahasa Dakwah Gus Miftah Di Pasar Kembang Yogyakarta: Analisis Isi Akun YouTube @GusMiftahOfficial," *Meyarsa: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi Dan Dakwah* 5, no. 2 (2024): 127–38, <https://doi.org/10.19105/meyarsa.v5i2.15194>.

¹⁶ Muhammad Anshar et al., "Content Analysis and Audience Receptions of Online Da'wah on YouTube Social Media," *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication* 40, no. 1 (2024): 173–87, <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2024-4001-10>.

¹⁷ Inaya Rakhmani, *Mainstreaming Islam in Indonesia* (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54880-1>.

¹⁸ James Bourk Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam, Piety, Prosperity, and A Self-Help Guru* (Stanford University Press, 2015); Julia Day Howell, "Christendom, the Ummah and Community in the Age of Televangelism," *Social Compass* 61, no. 2 (2014): 234–49, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768614524322>; Dicky Sofjan, "Gender Construction in Dakwahtainment: A Case Study of Hati Ke Hati Bersama Mamah Dedeh," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 50, no. 1 (2012): 57–74, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2012.501.57-74>.

media landscape rather than being displaced by it. As media logic has become more deeply embedded in contemporary da'wah, scholarly attention has further expanded to the commodification and mediatization of religion.¹⁹ Existing studies demonstrate that Islamic symbols, religious authorities, and preaching practices have become increasingly integrated into the media industry through advertising, sponsorship, religious television dramas, and digital platforms. Consequently, da'wah is understood not merely as the transmission of religious teachings but also as a communicative practice that continuously negotiates economic interests, popular culture, and media technologies.²⁰ Overall, the existing literature has predominantly focused on the transformation of preaching media, the construction of new forms of religious authority, and the processes of religious mediatization and commodification.

Scholarly attention to Gus Miftah's preaching has also grown considerably in recent years. Several studies have examined his da'wah strategies in engaging marginalized communities through humanistic, dialogical, and inclusive approaches, portraying preaching as a social practice that bridges communities traditionally distant from formal religious spaces.²¹ Other studies have focused on his use of digital media to expand the reach of Islamic preaching, highlighting the adoption of informal language, everyday conversational styles, and communication practices that resonate with the culture of social media.²² In addition, several scholars have explored the controversies surrounding Gus Miftah's preaching and the

¹⁹ Najib Kailani and Sunarwoto, *Elevangelisme Islam Dan Lanskap Otoritas Keagamaan Baru* "Dalam Ulama Dan Negara-Bangsa: Membaca Masa Depan Islam Politik Di Indonesia (Pusat Pengkajian Islam, Demokrasi, dan Perdamaian (PusPIDeP), 2019); James Bourk Hoesterey, *Pemasaran Moralitas: Naik, Jatuh, Dan Pembentukan Ulang Cap-Merk Aa Gym Dalam Ustadz Seleb Bisnis Moral Dan Fatwa Online Ragam Ekspresi Islam Indonesia Kontemporer*, Greag Fealy dan Sally White (Komunitas Bambu, 2012); Moch Fakhruroji, "Mediatization of Religion in 'Texting Culture': Self-Help Religion and the Shifting of Religious Authority," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 5, no. 2 (2015): 231, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v5i2.231-254>.

²⁰ Afidatul Asmar, "Ekspresi Keberagaman Online: Media Baru Dan Dakwah," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 40, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.21580/jid.v40.1.5298>; Pamungkas Anggit and Halwati Umi, "Manajemen Media TV9: Telaah Perkembangan Bisnis Dakwah Di Era Media Baru," *El Madani: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi Islam* 4, no. 2 (2025): 127–44, <https://doi.org/10.53678/0f6vr264>; Briandana et al., "Da'wah Communication and Social Media"; Ridwan Rustandi, "Analisis Wacana Kritis Komodifikasi Dai Dalam Program Televisi," *Communicatus: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 2, no. 2 (2018): 197–222, <https://doi.org/10.15575/cjik.v2i2.4949>.

²¹ Ritonga and Sartina, "Komunikasi Dakwah Gus Miftah Di Lokalisasi Pasar Kembang Yogyakarta"; Husna, "Dakwah Multikultural (Dakwah Gus Miftah Di Diskotik Hingga Gereja)"; Putra Pujiantara, "Dakwah Gus Miftah Dalam Bingkai Media Daring," *Kalijaga Journal of Communication* 2, no. 2 (2021): 135–52, <https://doi.org/10.14421/kjc.22.04.2020>.

²² Abd Bari et al., "Pemanfaatan YouTube Sebagai Media Dakwah Islam," *Al Qalam: Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 19, no. 2 (2025): 828, <https://doi.org/10.35931/aq.v19i2.4180>; Faisal and Yogi Abdullah, "Komunikasi Ulama Di Era Viral (Studi Representasi Gus Miftah Dan Narasi Religius Di Media Digital)," *PRESIDENSI: Jurnal Politik Dan Pemerintahan* 2, no. 2 (2025): 74–98, <https://doi.org/10.64019/presidensi.v2i2.69>; M. Ibnu Refqi Fadillah et al., "Retorika Gus Miftah Dalam Dakwah Pada Media Sosial Youtube," *Tabligh: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* 8, no. 1 (2023), <https://ejournal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/tabligh/article/view/644>.

public debates generated by his communication style.²³ Despite these contributions, existing studies have generally treated humor as a rhetorical feature or stylistic element of his sermons rather than as an independent object of scholarly inquiry. Consequently, limited attention has been paid to how humor is constructed, what communication techniques are employed to produce humorous effects, and how these techniques contribute to the communicative effectiveness of dakwahtainment in digital environments. Addressing this gap, the present study conceptualizes humor as a communication strategy within dakwahtainment by examining the humor techniques employed in Gus Miftah's YouTube sermons and explaining how these techniques facilitate the communication of religious messages.

Building upon this perspective, the present study seeks to explain how humor is constructed in Gus Miftah's dakwahtainment on YouTube and how such constructions function as a communication strategy for conveying religious messages. Specifically, the study aims to explain the communicative mechanisms through which humor operates in digital dakwahtainment by analyzing the construction of humor and its communicative functions in the delivery of da'wah. By doing so, this study seeks to extend the scholarship on dakwahtainment by introducing humor as a communication strategy rather than merely a rhetorical feature of religious preaching. It also contributes to the broader field of digital da'wah communication by providing a systematic explanation of the communicative mechanisms through which humor fosters audience engagement and enhances the effectiveness of communicating Islamic messages.

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to examine how humor is constructed and utilized as a communication strategy in Gus Miftah's dakwahtainment on YouTube.²⁴ A case study was considered appropriate because the research focuses on a single empirical case—Gus Miftah—who consistently incorporates humor into the communication of Islamic teachings across diverse preaching contexts. Rather than seeking statistical generalization, the study aimed to generate an in-depth contextual understanding of humorous communication within its social, cultural, and religious settings. The research population comprised all of Gus Miftah's sermons available on YouTube. At the time of data collection, the official YouTube channel @gusmiftahofficial alone contained approximately 1.073 uploaded videos, excluding numerous additional recordings disseminated through other YouTube channels. Given the size of this corpus, criterion-based purposive sampling

²³ Hasanah, "Kontroversi Orasi Kebangsaan Gus Miftah Di Gereja Gethel Indonesia (GBI) Penjaringan Jakarta Utara (Analisis Dakwah Dan New Media)"; Kelik Tri Rahmadi, "Analisis Wacana Berita Kontroversi Gus Miftah Dan Penjual Es Teh Di Kompas.Com Dan Detik.Com Edisi 1-4 Desember 2024," *Meyarsa: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi Dan Dakwah* 6, no. 2 (2025): 181–97, <https://doi.org/10.19105/meyarsa.v6i2.22886>; Laila Margaretha Nur Habibah and Imam Baehaqie, "Pelanggaran Prinsip Kesopanan Dalam Ceramah Gus Miftah Maulana Habiburrahman," *Artikulasi: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia* 5, no. 1 (2025): 75–85, <https://doi.org/10.17509/artikulasi.v5i1.77996>; Rifki Setiawan et al., "Netizen Dan Cancel Culture: Studi Komunikasi Dakwah Gus Miftah," *Jurnal Komunikan* 4, no. 1 (2025): 45–60, <https://doi.org/10.30993/jurnalkomunikan.v4i1.509>.

²⁴ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan R&D*, 19th ed. (Alfabeta, 2013).

was employed to identify data that were most relevant to the research objectives.²⁵ Based on the predetermined selection criteria, seven sermon videos were chosen as the units of analysis because they were considered representative of Gus Miftah's dakwahtainment practices. The selected videos fulfilled several criteria: (1) they documented direct interactions between Gus Miftah and live audiences; (2) they contained repeated and observable uses of humor as an integral part of religious message delivery; and (3) they represented diverse preaching themes, audience characteristics, and communicative settings. These criteria enabled the identification of recurring patterns in the construction and use of humor across different dakwahtainment contexts.

Data were collected through documentary observation of the seven selected YouTube sermon videos. All verbal expressions containing humorous elements were subsequently transcribed verbatim. The unit of analysis comprised utterances, dialogues, narratives, and interactional sequences that contained humor and functioned as part of the communication of religious messages. Data analysis was conducted in three sequential stages: identification, classification, and interpretation.²⁶ During the first stage, all humorous segments were identified through repeated readings of the transcripts while simultaneously examining their audiovisual context in the original videos. In the second stage, each humorous segment was classified using Arthur Asa Berger's humor techniques framework, which served as the analytical instrument for identifying the communication techniques underlying the construction of humor. In the final stage, the identified humor techniques were interpreted to explain how humor was constructed in Gus Miftah's sermons and how these techniques functioned to attract audience attention, foster emotional closeness, enhance audience engagement, and facilitate the communication of religious messages within dakwahtainment. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the interpretive process was conducted iteratively by cross-checking the transcripts against the original video recordings, thereby ensuring that each interpretation remained consistent with its original communicative context.

Humor and Fictional Stories in Dawah

Fictional storytelling emerged as the most dominant form of humor employed by Gus Miftah in his dakwahtainment. Humor was constructed through fictional narratives presented in a manner that resembled real-life experiences, allowing audiences to follow the storyline until its conclusion. Within the corpus analyzed in this study, fictional stories appeared in various forms, including narratives involving genies (*jin*), animals, and imaginary characters associated with everyday life experiences. Although fictional in nature, these narratives were consistently embedded within the delivery of religious teachings and formed an integral part of the overall sermon. This pattern recurred across a wide range of preaching themes,

²⁵ Accessed July 20, 2026, <https://socialblade.com/youtube/handle/gusmiftahofficial>.

²⁶ Matthew B. Miles et al., *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Source Book*, Third (Arizona State University, 2014).

indicating that fictional storytelling constitutes a distinctive and consistently employed form of humor in Gus Miftah's communication style.

One example of this pattern is a fictional story about three men who encounter a genie. Gus Miftah narrated the story as follows:

"Three friends met a genie who promised to grant their requests. The first person asked for 100 beautiful women to be brought, the second person asked for various kinds of delicious liquor, and the third person asked for various brands of expensive cigarettes. The genie granted their requests and put the three people into three different caves that were already filled according to their respective requests. They lived in them for one year."

The story then continued by describing the condition of each character after they emerged from the caves. Gus Miftah explained:

"After a year had passed, the genie took them out of the cave one by one. The adulterer came out of the cave weak, thin, and exhausted because he had had sex with a hundred women in a year. The drunkard came out of the cave thin, dry, and pale because he only drank alcohol every day. At the same time, the smoker came out healthy, mighty, strong, and even looked more handsome than before."

The narrative concluded with a dialogue between the smoker and the jinn, which served as the humorous ending of the story. Gus Miftah stated:

*"Even though the smoker came out of the cave in good health and better condition, he came out angry at the genie. You insolent genie, you gave me lots of cigarettes in the cave, but you didn't give me a lighter."*²⁷

Immediately after this dialogue, the audience responded with laughter before Gus Miftah proceeded to the next part of his sermon.

Another instance of fictional storytelling appeared in a narrative about an Islamic scholar (kyai) who was hunting a tiger. Gus Miftah recounted that the kyai failed to defeat the tiger because it was immune to gunfire and was eventually chased to the edge of a cliff. As the kyai surrendered himself to God and closed his eyes in prayer, he expected the tiger to attack. However, when he opened his eyes, the tiger had stopped in front of him. When the kyai asked why he had not been eaten, the tiger replied, *"Please wait, Kyai. I also want to pray first,"* before reciting the Islamic supplication traditionally offered before eating, *Allahumma barik lana*.²⁸ The audience responded to the story with laughter. At the end of the narrative, Gus Miftah explained that the story had originally been popularized by Indonesia's fourth President, KH. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur). The recurrence of such fictional narratives across different sermon themes indicates that imaginative storytelling constitutes one of the humor forms consistently employed in Gus Miftah's preaching style.

²⁷ Cak Adin, *Alasan Gus Miftah Tidak Merokok*, n.d., accessed July 20, 2026, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVyQtX_gEOc.

²⁸ Kurnia FM, *Presiden Jokowi Ngakak Denger Do,a Macan Makan Kiai Dari Gus Miftah*, n.d., accessed July 20, 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjzeN3NOFrg>.

A Misfortune Worth Laughing At

In addition to constructing humor through fictional narratives, Gus Miftah also drew upon personal experiences and social realities as sources of humor in his sermons. These experiences were not necessarily associated with pleasant events but instead originated from situations commonly perceived as misfortune, hardship, or the ironies of everyday life. Across different preaching contexts, such experiences were incorporated into the delivery of religious messages in ways that elicited laughter from the audience while remaining closely connected to the religious themes under discussion. One example occurred when Gus Miftah explained the spiritual rewards associated with a believer's intentions (niyyah). After encouraging the audience to intend to have marital relations with their spouses as part of worship, he directed a humorous remark toward widowed members of the audience, stating:

*"If a believer's intention is carried out, the reward is multiplied tenfold. If it is not carried out, one complete good deed is still recorded. Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, from now on, make the intention that when you arrive home, you will have marital relations with your husband or wife. But what if you get home and forget, or simply fall asleep? The reward has already been written. Those of you who are widows do not need to make such an intention—who would you do it with anyway? Life is beautiful when accompanied by widows and laughter."*²⁹

The audience responded to this remark with laughter before Gus Miftah continued with the next part of his sermon.

Another form of humor was derived from Gus Miftah's personal experiences before he became widely known as a preacher. In one of his sermons, he recounted his experience of working as a pedicab (*becak*) driver for six months while pursuing his studies in Yogyakarta. This experience was presented through a series of light-hearted anecdotes about the profession, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

*"I worked as a pedicab driver for six months while studying in Yogyakarta because my parents in Lampung could not support my living expenses. In my opinion, pedicab drivers have the most relaxed and prestigious job. Why? When there are no passengers, they simply ride their own pedicab and take a nap. Being a pedicab driver is also much easier than being a football referee. Football referees run back and forth just looking for other people's mistakes. Boxing referees are even stranger—when two people hug each other, they separate them, but when people fight at night, they just let them continue. Pedicab drivers must wear trousers; they cannot wear a sarong. Otherwise, they might press the wrong brake because the brake is located at the front."*³⁰

Rather than being presented as a melancholic account of personal struggle, the experience was narrated as a humorous story through a series of light-hearted remarks and anecdotes delivered during the sermon. These examples demonstrate that experiences

²⁹ santri nu chanel, *Janda Bikin Geger Di Pengajian Gus Miftah - Pengajian Paling Seru Gus Miftah 2023*, n.d., accessed July 20, 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/live/PYAvGFLI3IM>.

³⁰ New Budaya Jawa, *Cak Percil Cs Ngaji Bareng Gus Miftah !! Kisah Tukang Becak Dadi Kiai*, n.d., accessed July 20, 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-vkcj0Q5rQ>.

associated with hardship, personal limitations, and misfortune repeatedly appeared as sources of humor throughout Gus Miftah's preaching. Such patterns indicate that personal and social adversity constituted one of the recurring forms of humor employed in his dakwahtainment.

You are Surprised, But You Laugh

Gus Miftah also constructed humor through elements of surprise that emerged during the delivery of his sermons. This form of humor appeared through abrupt shifts in narrative, unexpected verbal expressions, and vocal performances that startled the audience. These various forms of surprise recurred throughout his sermons, constituting one of the distinctive characteristics of his communication style.

One example occurred when Gus Miftah recounted the story of Bilal ibn Rabah's longing for the Prophet Muhammad after the Prophet's passing. The narrative was delivered in a solemn atmosphere, describing Bilal's sorrow as he left Madinah because every corner of the city reminded him of the Prophet. Gus Miftah narrated:

"After the Prophet Muhammad passed away, Bilal no longer wished to remain in Madinah because every corner of the city reminded him of the Prophet. Eventually, he moved to Syria. After living there for a long time, Bilal dreamed of meeting the Prophet Muhammad one night. In the dream, the Prophet reminded Bilal to visit his grave in Madinah. When Bilal awoke, he wept uncontrollably because he had long been overwhelmed by his longing for the Prophet."

While the audience remained absorbed in the solemn atmosphere of the story, Gus Miftah continued:

"After waking up, Bilal immediately prepared his provisions and mounted his camel to travel to Madinah... Whooooosh!"³¹

As he uttered the sound "Whooooosh!", Gus Miftah blew forcefully into the microphone, producing a loud sound that startled the entire audience. His son, who was seated beside him, appeared visibly startled, almost jumping from his seat and knocking off the peci (traditional Muslim cap) he was wearing. The solemn atmosphere immediately shifted into laughter before the sermon resumed.

Surprise also emerged through wordplay embedded in prayers. While praying for an audience member named Mrs. Nani, Gus Miftah first said:

Gus Miftah: May Mrs. Nani be blessed with a long life

Jamaah: Ameen.

Gus Miftah: Until everyone else has passed away, leaving Mrs. Nani all alone.³²

The audience burst into laughter immediately after having responded "Ameen" to the prayer. A similar pattern appeared when Gus Miftah prayed for the chairman of the event committee:

Gus Miftah: I pray that everyone attending this gathering will enter Paradise.

³¹ Cakra gaming, *Ceramah Gus Miftah Tentang Kisah Bilal Bin Rabah*, n.d., accessed July 20, 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZpjBiIlnfU>.

³² AVIN VideoS, *Ibu-Ibu Ini Bikin Geger Pengajian Gus Miftah ..Bikin Ngakak.!! (Pengajian Lucu Gus Miftah Maulana)*, n.d., accessed July 20, 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVZvK67ste8>.

Audience: Ameen.

Gus Miftah: May the chairman of the committee enter Paradise as soon as possible.

Audience: Ameen.

Gus Miftah: Right after this religious gathering.³³

The prayer was once again followed by laughter from the audience. These examples demonstrate that surprise constituted one of the recurring forms of humor in Gus Miftah's preaching style, appearing through abrupt shifts in narrative, unexpected verbal expressions, and vocal performances delivered during his sermons.

Joking and Laughing in Swearing

In addition to employing fictional stories, personal experiences, and elements of surprise, Gus Miftah also constructed humor through the use of swearing during his interactions with the audience. This form of humor emerged when expressions that are generally regarded as offensive or impolite in everyday conversation were incorporated into the delivery of religious messages. In the present study, swearing did not function as an expression of anger or hostility. Instead, it appeared as a spontaneous response to particular situations, audience remarks, or as part of Gus Miftah's explanation of religious topics. The recurrent use of such expressions constituted one of the distinctive features of his communication style throughout the sermons analyzed.

The swear expressions most frequently employed by Gus Miftah included *jancuk*,³⁴ *matamu*, and *ndasmu*.³⁵ These expressions appeared repeatedly across different sermons when he interacted with the audience, whether in response to audience comments, while commenting on particular situations, or when emphasizing specific points in his religious message. Although these expressions are commonly recognized as swear words in Javanese, they were consistently met with laughter from the audience throughout the sermons observed in this study. This recurring response indicates that swearing formed a recognizable and recurring feature of Gus Miftah's communication style during the delivery of his sermons.

The use of humor through swearing also varied according to the communicative context of the sermon. Within the corpus analyzed, swear expressions were found primarily in informal religious gatherings attended by audiences who were already familiar with Gus Miftah's communication style. By contrast, this form of humor was absent from sermons delivered in more formal settings, such as mosques, gatherings attended by religious leaders, and state ceremonies. These observations indicate that the use of swearing was not employed

³³ JTV Rek, *Live | Sahur Bareng Gus Miftah* | JTV, n.d., accessed July 20, 2026, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGVhY_T-M9o.

³⁴ Rafelina Rosa Al Edhen et al., *Impresi Penggunaan Kata "Jancuk" Dalam Komunikasi Antarmahasiswa*, 2023.

³⁵ Term "matamu, ndasmu" is an expression of frustration and a curse directed at someone who is considered to have broken the rules, failed to do as expected, or shown ignorance about something that is generally common knowledge. See: Eko Heriyanto, "Javanese Swearing Words: An Analysis of Shifting and Changing Referring Connotative Meaning," *Journal of Language and Health* 1, no. 1 (2020): 29–38, <https://doi.org/10.37287/jlh.v1i1.102>.

uniformly across all preaching contexts but was adapted to the characteristics of the audience and the communicative setting in which the sermon took place.

Humor as a Communication Strategy in Gus Miftah's Dakwahtainment

Humor in Gus Miftah's dakwahtainment cannot be understood merely as an entertaining interlude inserted into religious sermons; rather, it constitutes a communication strategy that is integrated into the overall process of delivering da'wah.³⁶ The diversity of humor techniques identified in this study demonstrates that the effectiveness of humor is not generated through a single communicative mechanism but through the combination of multiple techniques that complement one another according to the communicative context, audience characteristics, and the objectives of religious preaching.³⁷ Within this framework, laughter is not the ultimate goal of dakwahtainment but instead serves as a medium that facilitates the communication, reception, and internalization of religious messages.³⁸ Accordingly, humor in dakwahtainment should not be viewed merely as a rhetorical variation in a preacher's delivery style but rather as a communicative construct shaped through diverse humor techniques. This perspective can be explained through Arthur Asa Berger's humor framework, which conceptualizes humor as the product of communication techniques that systematically construct meaning, manage audience expectations, and generate humorous effects within communicative events.³⁹

Arthur Asa Berger's framework provides a relevant perspective for explaining the mechanisms through which humor is constructed in dakwahtainment by conceptualizing humor as the product of communication techniques that are deliberately employed within communicative interactions.⁴⁰ Unlike classical theories of humor, which primarily seek to explain why laughter occurs, Berger shifts the analytical focus toward how humor is constructed through communicative practices. This perspective makes it possible to understand humor as a communicative process that can be identified through a range of techniques, which Berger classifies into four principal categories: logic, language, identity, and action.⁴¹ Rather than operating independently, these categories interact in the construction of

³⁶ Fithriyah Inda Nur Abida et al., "Humor in Dakwah: A Socio-Pragmatic Study," *Randwick International of Education and Linguistics Science Journal* 5, no. 2 (2024): 453–63, <https://doi.org/10.47175/rielsj.v5i2.983>.

³⁷ Yuntarti Istiqomalia, "Metode Dakwah Dalam Menghadapi Perkembangan Budaya Populer," *INTELEKSIA - Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Dakwah* 4, no. 2 (2022): 361–78, <https://doi.org/10.55372/inteleksiajpid.v4i2.252>.

³⁸ Qudratullah et al., "Stand-Up Da'wah: Presenting Islamic Values through Contemporary Humorous Communication," in *Humor - Advances in Research and New Insights*, ed. Annalisa Grandi (IntechOpen, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.1011734>.

³⁹ Mardiana Ismail et al., "The Application of Asa Berger Humour Technique by Sabri Yunus from The Dramaturgy Perception in 'Karoot Komedi,'" *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education* 18, no. 2 (2019): 168, <https://doi.org/10.15294/harmonia.v18i2.12725>.

⁴⁰ Arthur Asa Berger, *An Anatomy of Humor* (Transaction Publishers, 1993).

⁴¹ Arthur Asa Berger, "Glossary: The 45 Techniques of Humor," in *Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors A Psycho-Semiotic Analysis* (Anthem Press; Cambridge University Press, 2023).

meaning, the management of audience expectations, and the production of humorous responses.⁴² Viewed through this framework, humor in Gus Miftah's dakwahtainment is no longer understood as a collection of spontaneously occurring jokes but as a communicative construct developed through the integrated management of narrative, social identity, language, and communicative performance. This perspective further suggests that the effectiveness of humor does not depend on any single technique but on the preacher's ability to combine multiple humor techniques in ways that are appropriate to the communicative context and the characteristics of the audience.

Fictional storytelling in Gus Miftah's dakwahtainment demonstrates that humor is constructed through the deliberate management of narrative structures that simultaneously build and subvert audience expectations.⁴³ Within Arthur Asa Berger's framework, this mechanism corresponds to the logic category, in which humor is generated by manipulating patterns of reasoning to create logical incongruities that produce humorous effects.⁴⁴ This mechanism is evident in both the story of the three men who encountered a jinn and the narrative of the kyai pursued by a tiger. In both cases, the narratives initially encourage the audience to develop particular expectations before concluding with an unexpected reversal that elicits laughter while sustaining audience attention. Accordingly, the effectiveness of the humor lies not in the fictional nature of the stories themselves but in the preacher's ability to manage audience expectations through narrative structure. This finding extends the existing understanding of storytelling in da'wah, which has predominantly been regarded as a medium for transmitting moral values and religious teachings.⁴⁵ Previous studies have consistently shown that storytelling is an effective means of communicating ideas, fostering emotional connections, and facilitating audience understanding of conveyed messages.⁴⁶ In Gus Miftah's dakwahtainment, however, storytelling serves not only as a vehicle for communicating religious messages but also as a humor technique that sustains audience engagement throughout the communicative process. Humor and storytelling, therefore,

⁴² Arthur Asa Berger, "The Semiotics of Humour: Universal Humour Techniques in Comedy Writing," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Music in Comedy Cinema*, ed. Emilio Audissino and Emile Wennekes (Springer International Publishing, 2023), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-33422-1_2.

⁴³ Le Huu Thang dkk., "Penggunaan Teknik Ber cerita di Kelas: Studi Empiris di Universitas Thai Nguyen," *Jurnal Internasional Ilmu Sosial dan Penelitian Manusia* 7, No. 04 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v7-i04-51>.

⁴⁴ Berger, "The Semiotics of Humour."

⁴⁵ Muhammad Irfan Affandi and Arya Alfarrel, "Pemanfaatan Storytelling Sebagai Alat Persuasif Dalam Dakwah," *Jurnalika: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 10, no. 1 (2026): 46–55, <https://doi.org/10.37949/jurnalika101287>; Rully Khairul Anwar et al., "Mendongeng Sebagai Metode Dakwah Edukatif Pembentuk Karakter Islami Anak," *Anida (Aktualisasi Nuansa Ilmu Dakwah)* 23, no. 2 (2023): 129–50, <https://doi.org/10.15575/anida.v23i2.29361>.

⁴⁶ Carmine Gallo, "Storytelling to Inspire, Educate, and Engage," *American Journal of Health Promotion* 33, no. 3 (2019): 469–72, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0890117119825525b>; Le Huu Thang et al., "The Use of Story-Telling Techniques in Classroom: An Empirical Study at Thai Nguyen University," *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research* 7, no. 04 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v7-i04-51>; Mariyatul Norhidayati Rahmah et al., "Local Wisdom-Based Da'wah Rhetoric: Analysis of Guru's Communication Styles in South Kalimantan," *MUHARRIK: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Sosial* 8, no. 1 (2025): 240–52, <https://doi.org/10.37680/muharrik.v8i1.7762>.

should not be understood as separate communicative elements but as mutually integrated strategies that enhance the effectiveness of religious communication.

Unlike fictional storytelling, which constructs humor through the management of narrative structure, humor derived from misfortune is constructed through the social identities that become objects of laughter within particular communicative contexts. In Arthur Asa Berger's framework, this mechanism corresponds to the identity category, in which humor is generated by drawing upon personal characteristics, social status, and lived experiences as sources of humorous effects.⁴⁷ This pattern is evident in jokes concerning widowhood as well as in Gus Miftah's recollections of working as a pedicab (becak) driver before becoming a well-known preacher. However, the effectiveness of such humor is not determined solely by social status or difficult life experiences themselves, but by the preacher's ability to frame these experiences as narratives that audiences recognize as collectively shared.⁴⁸ This finding suggests that social identity in humor is inherently contextual, as its meaning is shaped by the relationship between the preacher and the audience as well as by the communicative setting in which the humor is delivered. This interpretation differs from the assumptions of Superiority Theory, which generally explains humor as an expression of superiority over the weaknesses or misfortunes of others.⁴⁹ In Gus Miftah's dakwahtainment, laughter more often emerges through the negotiation of meanings attached to social experiences that are already familiar to the audience. Consequently, humor reflects not merely superiority but also emotional closeness, shared experiences, and mutual recognition of the communicative context. Social identity in dakwahtainment, therefore, functions not as an object of humiliation but as a communicative medium through which religious messages become more readily accepted by audiences through socially negotiated experiences.

If fictional storytelling and laughable misfortune construct humor primarily through the management of narrative and social identity, humor derived from surprise and swearing demonstrates that the effectiveness of dakwahtainment also depends on the preacher's communicative performance. Within Berger's framework, these mechanisms correspond to the language and action categories, which encompass humor techniques that rely on linguistic choices, intonation, vocal delivery, facial expression, and physical actions to produce humorous effects.⁵⁰ The action dimension is illustrated by Gus Miftah's sudden blow into the microphone during the story of Bilal, which abruptly transformed a solemn atmosphere into laughter. The language dimension, meanwhile, is reflected in the unexpected reversals embedded in his prayers for Mrs. Nani and the chairman of the organizing committee, as well as in the use of expressions such as *jancuk*, *matamu*, and *ndasmu* as part of his informal interaction with the audience. Previous studies have shown that communicative

⁴⁷ Berger, "The Semiotics of Humour."

⁴⁸ S. Venkatesan, "A Short Compilation on Theories of Humor and Laughter," *PARIPEX INDIAN JOURNAL OF RESEARCH*, June 15, 2022, 123–25, <https://doi.org/10.36106/paripex/3008409>.

⁴⁹ Rod A. Martin, *The Psychology of Humor: An Integrative Approach* (Elsevier Academic Press, 2007).

⁵⁰ Berger, "Glossary: The 45 Techniques of Humor"; Berger, "The Semiotics of Humour."

performance—including intonation, expressive delivery, and elements of surprise—plays a crucial role in capturing attention and sustaining audience engagement during public speaking.⁵¹ In Gus Miftah's dakwahtainment, however, communicative performance functions not merely as a delivery technique but as an integral component of humor construction that brings together language, action, and social context within a unified communicative performance. Consequently, the effectiveness of humor is determined not by linguistic choices or physical actions in isolation, but by the preacher's ability to integrate language, expressive performance, physical action, and cultural proximity into a coherent communicative practice through which humor remains acceptable as part of religious preaching rather than being perceived as undermining religious authority.⁵²

Overall, humor in Gus Miftah's dakwahtainment demonstrates that the effectiveness of religious communication is determined not by the presence of humor as a form of entertainment, but by the preacher's ability to construct diverse humor techniques in ways that are responsive to audience characteristics and communicative contexts. From Berger's perspective, this construction reflects the interaction of the dimensions of logic, identity, language, and action, which operate simultaneously to construct meaning, manage audience expectations, strengthen social closeness, and sustain audience engagement throughout the preaching process. This perspective highlights that humor should no longer be regarded as a supplementary rhetorical device but as a communicative construct that connects the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of audiences with the substance of religious messages.⁵³ Accordingly, the effectiveness of dakwahtainment depends not only on the content of religious teachings but also on the preacher's ability to transform normative religious messages into communicative experiences that resonate with the everyday realities of audiences.⁵⁴ In this sense, humor functions as a communicative mechanism that bridges religious authority and everyday social experience, enabling da'wah to operate not merely as the transmission of religious teachings but as a process of meaning-making negotiated between the preacher and the audience.

⁵¹ Zhen Xu, "Laughing Matters: Humor Strategies in Public Speaking," *Asian Social Science* 12, no. 1 (2015): 117, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v12n1p117>; Jaini Jaini and Mad Sa'i, "Public Speaking: Teknik Berbicara Di Depan Umum Dalam Mengelola Vokal Dan Gesture Yang Tepat," *SANISKALA: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 3, no. 1 (2025): 25–34, <https://doi.org/10.31949/jsk.v3i1.13506>.

⁵² Siti Rumilah et al., "Digital Orality and Islamic Preaching: Ethnosociopragmatics as a Lens for Humor in Religious Discourse," *REiLA: Journal of Research and Innovation in Language* 8, no. 1 (2026): 21–35, <https://doi.org/10.31849/vyzhn310>.

⁵³ Asep Abbas Abdullah et al., "'Humor in Da'wah': Socio-Linguistic Analytic of Kyai Ishaq Latif Da'wah from Pesantren Tebuireng Jombang," *Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal for Homiletic Studies* 14, no. 2 (2020): 211–30, <https://doi.org/10.15575/idajhs.v14i2.9053>.

⁵⁴ Abdullah Khusairi, "Creative Content Production Strategies for Religious Outreach Materials on Social Media," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 45, no. 2 (2025): 341–56, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jid.v45.2.28022>.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that humor in Gus Miftah's dakwahtainment functions not merely as an entertaining interlude but as a systematically constructed communication strategy for conveying religious messages. This strategy is manifested through four dominant forms of humor: fictional storytelling in preaching, laughable misfortune, surprising twists, and joking through swearing. These findings indicate that dakwahtainment does not rely on a single humor mechanism but instead employs diverse communication techniques that are adapted to the communicative context, audience characteristics, and the objectives of religious preaching. Consequently, humor serves not only to elicit laughter but also to enhance audience engagement while facilitating the communication and reception of religious messages.

The findings further demonstrate that the effectiveness of humor in dakwahtainment can be understood through the interaction of the dimensions of logic, identity, language, and action, as conceptualized by Arthur Asa Berger. From this perspective, humor emerges from the integration of multiple communication techniques that collectively shape audience expectations, foster social closeness, strengthen communicative performance, and sustain audience attention. Accordingly, this study reinforces the argument that humor in dakwahtainment should be understood not merely as a preacher's rhetorical style but as a communicative mechanism that bridges religious values with the everyday social experiences of audiences in digital environments.

This study contributes to the advancement of dakwahtainment scholarship by conceptualizing humor as a structured communication strategy rather than merely a personal characteristic or rhetorical style of preaching. In doing so, it extends the field of digital da'wah communication by demonstrating that the effectiveness of religious message delivery depends not only on the substance of the message itself but also on the communication techniques through which audience engagement is constructed. Future research may build upon these findings by conducting comparative studies of humor employed by other digital preachers across different social media platforms and cultural contexts, thereby developing a more comprehensive understanding of the transformation of communication strategies in contemporary digital da'wah.

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