DE-WESTERNIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA DEPENDENCY FOR DA'WAH PURPOSES

Diwesternisasi Kebergantungan kepada Media Sosial untuk Keperluan Dakwah.

Azizah Abdul Majid, Azlina Mohamed Noor
Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia

azimad@usim.edu.my

Abstract
The role of de-westernization as a concept is to internalize how global knowledge is generated, suggesting an epistemic shift away from Eurocentric ideas. Social and communication studies have long adopted and embrace the empowerment of such ideas until the De-westernization came to being. On a different spectrum, many Muslim scholars have been deeply involved with the concept of Islamization of knowledge which gained momentum in the 80s. As what Al-Faruqi suggested in the late 1980s, awareness towards Islamization of knowledge requires the Muslims to embrace the legacy of Islamic teaching but at the same time master the modern discipline and find methods of assimilation of both knowledge so that the religion can be shared and disseminated through the modern context. This conceptual paper explores the dependency on the new media especially utilizing the social media platform is what the new dai'e and modern dak'wah have established, knowing really well of its power on the society as a communication platform. These social media such as Facebook and Instagram are used in disseminating and persuading the people towards good deeds. This amongst other things are some of the aspects of de-westernization process that can be seen in this generation in spreading Islamic content and knowledge.

Keywords: De-westernization, da'wah, Islamization of knowledge.

Abstrak
Diwesternisasi ialah konsep yang wujud untuk mendalami pengetahuan global yang dihasilkan dan mencadangkan perpindahan episemik dari idea-idea Eurocentric. Di dalam spectrum yang berbeza ramai cendikiawan Islam telah terlibat secara mendalam dengan konsep Islamisasi pengetahuan yang memulakan momentumnya pada tahun 80an yang dipelopori oleh Al Faruqi yang menggalakkan umat Islam untuk mengamalkan warisan pengajaran Islam tetapi pada masa yang sama belajar untuk menguasai disiplin moden. Kertas konseptual ini membincangkan tentang asimilasi di antara teknologi moden dan barat

dnegan pengetahuan Islam supaya ilmu agama dapat dikongsi dan disebarkan melalui konteks moden. Dakwah moden dan pendahwah baru sangat bergantung kepada media sosial disebabkan mereka mengetahui kuasanya dalam masyarakat sebagai wacana komunikasi. Media sosial seperti Facebook dan Instagram digunakan sebagai medan dalam penyebaran nilai-nilai murni dan memupuk masyrakat untuk mengamalkannya. Ini antara lain adalah beberapa aspek proses diwesternisasi yang dapat dilihat dalam generasi ini dalam menyebarkan kandungan dan pengetahuan Islam.

Kata kunci: Diwesternisasi, Dakwah, Islamisasi Pengetahuan.

OVERVIEW OF DE-WESTERNISATION

Westernization is a process whereby societies adopt Western culture in areas such as lifestyle, language, religion, and values. Westernization has been an accelerating influence across the world in the last few centuries, with some thinkers assuming Westernization to be the equivalent of modernization, a way of thought that is often debated. The overall process of Westernization is often two-sided in that Western influences and interests themselves are joined with parts of the affected society, at minimum, to change towards a more Westernized society, in the hope of attaining Western life or some aspects of it, while Western societies are themselves affected by this process and interaction with non-Western groups. In short, Westernization causes the ideas and ways of doing things that are common in the West and used and accepted by others in another part of the world.

On the other hand, the definition of de-westernization is not really clear, as it presently denotes various meanings, such as 'an act of cultural defense, an anti-imperialist strategy to nurture academic sovereignty, a call for embracing an analytical perspective that reflects a decentered, dynamic contemporary world' (Waisbord and Mellado, 2014). De-westernization can also be understood as an ongoing shift moving away from referring to any form of knowledge through the lens of the imperial power due to cultural, ethical and religious differences that simply cannot be viewed or taught based on one single framework. The complexity and diversity of the world and society making De-westernization a strategic move so as to avoid the dissemination of knowledge being viewed through tainted glass.

The role of De-westernization as a concept is to internalize how global knowledge is generated, suggesting an epistemic shift away from Eurocentrism ideas. It is a term which has long defined world-wide research, and an integration of ideas stemming from historical and current intellectual debates within countries of the global South (Glück, 2015). Most academic disciplines such as communication studies, social and economic sciences or political studies have been taught since colonial times have strong Eurocentric undertone. Where other races and

other ethnicities are concerned, the contributions of non-Western scholars however have been greatly marginalized.

The end of the colonial empires has seen calls for emancipation and integration of knowledge surge from different parts of the globe. De-westernization can be understood here synchronously as a co- as well as a counter-debate, because it wants to achieve both – to complement the existing body of knowledge and to question it (Glück, 2015) At the same time, it denounces the ambiguity of removing 'things Western' without specifying which elements should be removed (Wang, 2011). Embracing the knowledge from the western world would mean exposing oneself to the secular knowledge that can be contradicting to the lifestyle and mindset of a Muslim. Now, this is the dilemma of most Muslim ummah throughout the world.

ISLAMIZATION OF CONTEMPORARY KNOWLEDGE

On the other side of the world, a great revolution on Islam on the onset of 1970's started 'to disseminate ideas and carved significant milestone'. Many Muslim scholars were concerned with the plight of the Muslim community and had been deeply involved with the concept of Islamization of knowledge which gained momentum in the 80s. This occurred as a result of the global consciousness for the "resurgence of Islam" in the 70s and the moment of gathering of prominent scholars in the First World Conference on Muslim Education in Makkah in 1977:

> "Nothing has engaged the Muslim scholars as deeply as this epistemological, social and political issue. The Secularism and the great speed with which secularization has engulfed the Muslim world has stirred the Muslim intellectuals from their indifference and motivated them to act" (Rosnani Hashim & Imron Rossidy, 2000)

This realization prompted many Muslim scholars to provide an outlook as to whether, science or contemporary knowledge needs to be Islamized as most of them come from the western world. The Muslim scholars are divided to the ones who believe that all sorts of knowledge in this world is from Allah and that it is already Islamic. There are also the Secularist Modernist who believe in the same idea that modern scientific knowledge is universal and culturally neutral (Rosnani Hashim & Imron Rossidy, 2000). Over a period of time, the rapid, rampant and massive development of science and technology give way to secular thoughts and ideas to this. Two great Muslim scholars, Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas and Ismail Al-Faruqi amongst many others, have expressed their concern to conceptualize the problems faced by the ummah as the modern technological development brings about the element of secularism that cannot be paralleled with *Tawheed* and other Islamic doctrines. Therefore, these two scholars proposed a reconciliation between these ideas in advancing the Islamization of knowledge.
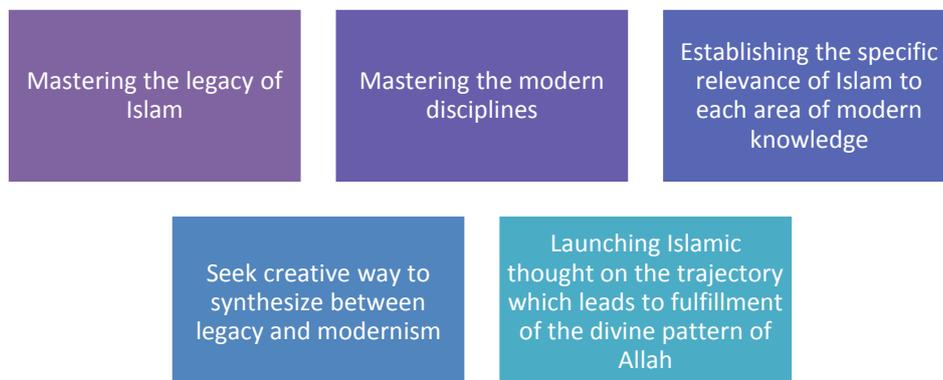
ISLAMIZATION OF CONTEMPORARY KNOWLEDGE BY AL-ATTAS AND AL-FARUQI

The phrase "Islamization of knowledge" was first used and proposed by the Malaysian scholar Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas in his book "Islam and Secularism" (1978). This phrase has been used in contemporary Islamic philosophy since the later twentieth century to refer to attempts to reconcile Islam and modernity, specifically seeking for a way to adopt the scientific method in a way consistent with Islamic ethical norms.

It was also proposed by the Palestinian philosopher Ismail Al-Faruqi, in 1982, in response to what he called "the malaise of the ummah" (faithful). He argued that by using tools, categories, concepts and modes of analysis that originated wholly in the secular West (like Marxism), there was a disconnect between the ecological and social reality of Muslim nations, and worse, a total inability to respect or even notice the violations of ethics of Islam itself. In his view, clashes between traditionalist ulama' and reformers seeking to revive Muslim society with modern science and professional categories, were inevitable without the strong ethical constraints that applied to methods of early Muslim philosophy. He proposed therefore to revive those methods, we should restore ijtihad and integrate scientific method within Islamic limits.

Through the lens of Al-Attas, Muslims need to be protected from the corrupted knowledge that misguide and mislead them to confusion and skepticism. He also suggests that knowledge which is in conformity with its true purpose is 'fitrah' and the Islamic Worldview will bring salvation to the world and hereafter. On a parallel ground, Al-Faruqi proposed a blueprint that can Islamize the modern knowledge through the following approach:

Figure 1: Al-Faruqi's Model on Islamization of Knowledge

Mastering the legacy of Islam

Mastering the modern disciplines

Establishing the specific relevance of Islam to each area of modern knowledge

Seek creative way to synthesize between legacy and modernism

Launching Islamic thought on the trajectory which leads to fulfillment of the divine pattern of Allah

As what can be seen from the blueprint, the contemporary, modern knowledge can find reconciliation and able to co-exist as long as it can give salvation to the ummah. Therefore the Islamization of content in media make way for many input that helps to be the trajectory towards the divinity of Islam.

DE-WESTERNISATION OF MEDIA DEPENDENCY THEORY

For many years since Melvin De Fleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach established the Theory of Media Dependency, the world has seen how influential media is to the society. The theory that describes the power of media on its user went back to the year 1975, when both communication scholars provided the assertion that the 'basis of media influence lies in the relationship between the larger social system, the media's role in that system, and audience relationship to the media" (cited in Baran & Davis, 2006). This emphasizes the role of media operation in providing what the society wants and needs. Although this theory started back in the 1970s when the influence of media can be said in the form of television and radio, the impact of this theory now can be extended to the new media such as the internet dependency on social media and online game.

Social media changes the way people and organizations interact and communicate, as they are computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information through virtual communities and networks. Research shows that people spend about 22 per cent of their time on social networking sites, thus proving how popular social media platforms have become (Nielsen, 2015). This increase is due to smart phones that have become a need in society's daily lives. The role of Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp, for example, provides massive relationship that seals the dependency between the user and the media itself. Indeed, a defining characteristic of new media is dialogue as it is grounded on an interactive community.

The role of new media is what was discussed in the *Wacana Media dan Komunikasi Islam 2016* in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia which focused on the quality of Islamic content in the media. Among the forum panelists in this forum was Ustaz Don Daniyal Don Biyajid, a lecturer from KUISCELL and a well-known figure of TV Al-Hijrah for his famous program *'30 Minit Ustaz Don'*. According to him, the weapon for communication in the media industry is now the social media that consist of Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. He elaborates that Instagram is one example of media that shares to the world the background information such as behind-the-scene content - the cameraman, the producer, and the speaker of a particular TV programme. Therefore Instagram is telling people what is going on in the media industry. Through Instagram live video, followers are able to broadcast their videos in real-time as part of Instagram Stories. In addition, the use of hashtag (#) allows the followers to share videos and pictures that could become a method of dakwah. In fact, Instagram is one of the most successful social media platforms with

more than 600 million monthly active users from all over the world (Tyagi, 2017).

Twitter is used to blast news and information in a compressed way so that people can be anxious to watch a certain program, whether an hour or 15 minutes more. It is an internet service that allows users to post "tweets" for their followers to see updates in real-time. Facebook, on the other hand is a platform to share anything based on real time event and augmented reality. As of April 2017, Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube are the top three leading social networks as they have the highest number of active account users. These new media act as a great weapon to reach myriad of people from all walks of life to share good and beneficial Islamic content. As what Ustaz Don reiterates in the abovementioned forum, there is a great awareness amongst the Muslims especially the Muslim scholars, ustaz and ustazah to be multidisciplinary in their knowledge as during the time of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W, there were many of his companions who were multi-talented in various disciplines of knowledge. For instance, Ibn Sina himself knew 19 disciplines of knowledge when he was still alive.

Hence, the platform of social media, strong internet bandwidth and technology such as smartphone, tablet or Ipad are the tools that can be used to share and disseminate dakwah content that can benefit the Muslim ummah throughout the world. The Muslim world is in dire need of Muslim scholars who are an expert in the legacy of Islamic knowledge, master the modern discipline such as the new technology and utilizing the Internet, finding the niche of Islam in the aspect of the modern world, seek creative ways in synthesizing the legacy of Islam in the era of modernism and finally launching Islamic thought in trajectory to the fulfillment of the divinity of religion. These are all the blueprint of the Islamisation of knowledge proposed by Al-Faruqi, who amongst other scholars had established the need to Islamize the modern knowledge in this globalized world. This way the Muslim ummah, even when they become the end user of technology designed by the West, would not be marginalized and will still be able to find the teachings of Islam and its divinity which is greatly relevant to the Muslim World.

DEPENDENCY ON FACEBOOK FOR COMMUNICATING DAKWAH CONTENT.

Communicating dakwah content through social media is one aspect of de-westernization process that can be seen in this generation. Social media being one the of most sought after media that changes the way people live their life is an effective tool to spread Islamic content that can benefit the ummah. The ability of some Islamic scholars such as Nouman Ali Khan, Mufti Ismail Menk, Professor Dr. Muhaya Mohamad and Ustaz Ebit Liew are some of the iconic figures that spread their dakwah through social media. The dependency on the social media that most generation at this moment has, helps to disseminate the dakwah content not just effectively but effortlessly. With Internet connection and

technology such as smartphone, there are many episodes of dakwah and talks that can be shared on real-time using Facebook features.

A seminar on *'Understanding Islam through Techno-Daie'* organized by the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM), managed to highlight several areas that explore social media as a form of dakwah. One of the highlights is the notion that there are more of "technocentric daie" who in essence preach whilst "utilizing technology for dakwah" - which has been agreed upon as being something of great importance for Islam in this new century as the society themselves are pretty much Technocentric (Shaikh Mohd Saifuddeen, 2013). Technology has broken down physical, geographical and political barriers that once may have stood in the way of getting things done efficiently and effectively. Due to this milestone, there exists a great need for the formation of a new breed of Muslim preachers.

According to Faradilla Iqmar Umar, Nor Azili Hasssan and Iza Sharina Salahuddin (2015), the role of social media in transmitting dakwah is so powerful because of the effectiveness of the message, the role of dai'e, the medium used, the right approach and the concept of *amal ma'ruf nahi mungkar.* These are all the influencing factors that can be seen as effective in disseminating media content. As one of the criteria of social media is sharing, it echoes the fact that every Muslim born in this world is a da'ie. This is in parallel to what Prof. Dr. Zulkiple Abd. Ghani, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International Affairs) said that "every Muslim is an Islamic communicator which serves as a dai'e – places responsibility to convey the message of Islam in accordance with their ability" (cited in Faradilla Iqmar Umar, Nor Azili Hasssan and Iza Sharina Salahuddin, 2015)

PLATFORM OF DAKWAH ON FACEBOOK IN REAL-TIME COMMUNICATION TO DISSEMINATE DAKWAH CONTENT.
The advent of social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter created a new opportunity amongst the dai'e as they are exciting, fast paced and highly interactive (Faradilla Iqmar Umar, Nor Azili Hasssan and Iza Sharina Salahuddin, 2015). As a dai'e gives talk or seminars, someone at the end of the room can help to record and simultaneously shares it on Facebook at exactly the same time. Through this way, many people who are not present at that particular talks or seminars can eventually watch the event 'live' on Facebook. Prof Dr. Muhaya Mohamad, Ustaz Ebit Liew and Nouman Ali Khan are amongst the speakers who are actively using Facebook as their platform for dakwah. Depending on this kind of media is helpful in spreading dakwah messages quickly and effectively. The figure below summarizes how social media act as platform for dakwah:

Figure 2: Social Media as Dakwah Platform
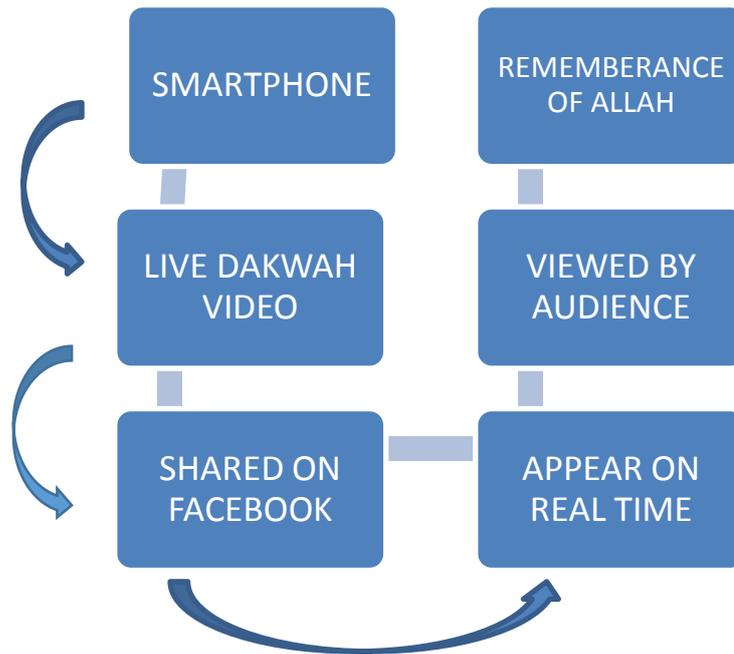
The powerful social media like Facebook has become a very useful tool to spread Islamic values and to correct people's negative ideas or misconceptions about Islam. By using a smartphone as a tool, a dai'e can broadcast his speech through 'live' video, which can be uploaded via YouTube or shared on Facebook. As the video appears on 'real-time', the audience or Facebook users are able to watch it instantly. As Facebook allows anyone to give comments, we can see that all kinds of views can be expressed. This, hopefully leads the audience to remember Allah and aware of their role as the *'khalifah'* on Earth.

Among prolific figures who use Facebook as their method of dakwah are Nouman Ali Khan, Dr. Zakir Naik, Imam Suhaib Webb, Sheikh Tawfique Chodury, Mufti Ismail Menk, and Malaysian preachers like Ustaz Kazim Elias, Ustaz Zahazan Mohamed and Ustaz Dr. Zaharuddin Abd Rahman (Omar et.al., 2014). They use this social media to explain about verses in Al-Quran using YouTube which then shared through Facebook. The spread of Islamic dakwah can be carried out anywhere and not necessarily in a mosque. Videos of talks and speeches that consist of accurate and detailed information about Islam can be shared at the dai'e's convenient time and place.

Figure 3: Nouman Ali Khan's Video Sharing on the Benefit of Everything.

In addition, Prof. Dr. Muhaya Mohamad who is a well-known ophthalmologist and motivator is someone who always shares her takzirah whilst she is at home after her subuh prayer or while she is on her way to work. She also has her own blog and Twitter account so as to enable her to interact with the society. In her Facebook, she shares many tips and advices to be an excellent individual without leaving behind Islamic values. She repeatedly reminds the audience that we should do everything for the sake of Allah, not to get attention from other human beings. At times she shares her interviews with IKIM FM live on her Facebook page. This platform gets few thousands of 'like', 'comments' and 'shares' within only seconds. A particular video by Prof. Muhaya shown in the figure below has received 72,000 views by the Facebook users. The utilization of social media as a platform of dakwah undoubtedly can be seen as massive and effective way to deliver Islamic knowledge throughout the world.

Figure 4: Prof. Muhaya was sharing her advice on maturity via IKIM FM

Another well-known dai'e who uses Facebook as a platform for dakwah is Ustaz Ebit Liew who always shares his enlightening journey to spread dakwah either though his status updates or through 'live', real time posting. Ustaz Ebit Liew is a Muslim convert who inspires many people to convert to Islam through his dakwah work. He has been to many places in the world but most importantly he has shed the 'nur' for dakwah in the life of many young generation through his programs such as his motivation camp for children, and his dakwah work for married people called Keluarga Sunnah which is happening every few months. Some of his works are well documented in his Facebook page. Similar to Prof. Muhaya, Ustaz Ebit Liew might be on the go all the time but that does not hamper him from sharing day-to-day takeaways from his dakwah journey via real-time post on Facebook. This impactful and effective da'ie is followed by almost 400, 000 Facebook users.

As these speakers share their dakwah content, the audience or the social media users around the world are able to view them simultaneously once they logon to their Facebook. Most 'followers' of this prominent Islamic figures will then share the content with other people. Hence, as the video is shared, within minutes, there would be thousands of people around the world "like" the content. This suggests the great power that the social media has as one of the strategies to impart dakwah and let the dependency on the media be of the beneficial ones.

Figure 5: Ustaz Ebit Liew sharing Doa for Blissful Marriage via real-time

CONCLUSION.

As what can be seen amongst the Muslim ummah nowadays, there is a significant milestone as to how the de-westernisation of knowledge has taken place in this 21st century. The Islamic knowledge that used to be marginalized and referred to as non-progressive or anti-modernism has found its way to stay relevant. As what Al-Faruqi suggested in the late 1980s, awareness towards Islamization of knowledge which requires the Muslims to embrace the legacy of Islamic teaching but at the same time learn to master the modern discipline and find methods of assimilation of both knowledge so that the religion can be shared and disseminated through the modern context. The relevancy of Islam as the way of life and the fact that Islam as a religion is all the time relevant until the end of time is marked by the ability of the western theory to be de-westernised. The theory of dependency marked by De Fleour in the 1970 can be extended through the modern world. The society is still depending on the media but more so for the Social Media. The context of dakwah is being expanded, the method of disseminating this missionary religion through the work of many techno-centric dai'e who are well-versed in their Islamic discipline is facilitated through the help of social media. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are some of the dominating media that give way and space to the religion that was used to be marginalized and misunderstood. This emancipation and liberty from being misinterpreted help the ummah to learn their religion in myriad of platform, that not only help them to go back to their creator but also made them understand the doctrine of Islam, its shariah and jurisprudence, its tawheed and many other disciplines of knowledge that leads to the divinity of religion, to Allah and the prophet. True to the belief of the Muslim communication is as vertical (relationship with Allah) and horizontal (relationships with human), the dependency on media is still there, the right platform, the relevance of the divine message benefits all walks of life in an effortless way in the modern 21st century.

REFERENCES

Faradillah Iqmar Omar, Nor Azili Hassan, Iza Sharina Salahuddin. (2015). Role of Social Media in Disseminating Dakwah. http://link.springer.com/chapter/ 10.1007/ 978-981- 287-429-0_5#page-1

Nouman Ali Khan Facebook Page. https://www.facebook.com/search/ top/?q=nukman%20ali%20khan

Glück, A. (2015). *Dewesternisation of communication theory. Media Conflict and Democratisation.* http://www.jillhopke.com/ 2012/12/de-westernizing-communication-theory-the-potential-and-challenges-of-popular-media-in-africa/

https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=nukman%20ali%20khan

Professor Dr. Muhaya Facebook Page. https://www.facebook.com/ search/ top/?q=prof% 20 muhaya

Rosnani Hashim & Imron Rossidy (2000) Islamization of Knowledge: A Comparative Analysis of the Conceptions of AI-Attas and AI-Fariiqi Intellectual Discourse, Vo/8, No I, 19-44. Retrieved file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/479-1112-1-PB.pdf

Saadia Izzeldin Malik. (2015). Islamic and Western perspectives on applied media ethics Intellectual Discourse, 23:2 (2015) 255-274. Retrieved file:///C:/Users/user/ Downloads/641-1654-1-PB.pdf.

Shaikh Mohd Saifuddeen Shaikh Mohd Salleh. (2013). *Techno Daie Crucial to Future of Islam.* http://www.ikim.gov.my/index.php/ en/new-strait-times/6901-strengthening-dakwah-with-technology.

Ustaz Ebit Liew Facebook Page. https://www.facebook.com/pg/Ebit-Lew- 465806410116276 /videos/?ref=page_internal.

Wacana Media dan Komunikasi Islam in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (November, 2016) Seminar attended at Fakulti Pengajian Islam UKM in collaboration with KUISCELL