Da'wa Communication Model in Indonesia and Malaysia

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Keywords	Abstract
Communication Model of Da'wa, Preachers, Culture and Religion, Social Context, Globalization	*This article examines the communication models employed by Islamic preachers (da'i) in Indonesia and Malaysia, with the aim of identifying effective strategies for disseminating religious messages within different cultural and societal contexts. By comparing the da'wa (Islamic preaching) approaches in both countries, the study analyzes how cultural, religious, and social dynamics shape communication practices. It explores both interpersonal and mass-mediated communication channels to uncover their respective strengths, limitations, and implications for contemporary da'wa. The analysis also considers the challenges posed by globalization and technological advancement, emphasizing the necessity for preachers to adapt to shifting modes of communication. Ultimately, this comparative study offers critical insights into the factors that contribute to successful Islamic preaching in Southeast Asia and provides practical recommendations for enhancing the relevance and impact of da'wa across diverse audiences.*
Kata kunci	**Abstrak**
Model Komunikasi Da'wa, Dai, Budaya dan Agama, Konteks Sosial, Globalisasi	*Artikel ini mengkaji model komunikasi yang digunakan oleh para pendakwa Islam (da'i) di Indonesia dan Malaysia, dengan tujuan mengidentifikasi strategi efektif untuk menyebarluaskan pesan-pesan keagamaan dalam konteks budaya dan masyarakat yang berbeda. Dengan membandingkan pendekatan dakwah di kedua negara, studi ini menganalisis bagaimana dinamika budaya, agama, dan sosial membentuk praktik komunikasi. Studi ini mengeksplorasi saluran komunikasi interpersonal dan media massa untuk mengungkap kekuatan, keterbatasan, dan implikasinya masing-masing bagi da'wa kontemporer. Analisis ini juga mempertimbangkan tantangan yang ditimbulkan oleh globalisasi dan kemajuan teknologi, yang menekankan perlunya para penda'wa untuk beradaptasi dengan perubahan moda komunikasi. Pada akhirnya, studi perbandingan ini menawarkan wawasan kritis tentang faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi pada keberhasilan da'wa Islam di Asia Tenggara dan memberikan rekomendasi praktis untuk meningkatkan relevansi dan dampak da'wa di antara beragam audiens.*

Introduction

Indonesia and Malaysia share deep-rooted cultural similarities, stemming from centuries of historical interaction. Both nations were once integral parts of influential

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empires such as Majapahit and Srivijaya, which played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural landscape of the Southeast Asian region (Makkelo, 2010). This historical interconnectedness has fostered a profound cultural affinity, largely centered around the Malay cultural tradition. Shared linguistic features, customs, traditional arts, and culinary practices—including iconic dishes such as *rendang*, *nasi lemak*, and *satay*—reflect this common heritage (Amran et al., 2017). Malaysia's National Cultural Policy further affirms the primacy of Malay culture within the national framework, reinforcing its enduring influence across societal dimensions (Matondang, 2016). The continued resonance of these shared cultural traits highlights the historical and ethnic ties between various Malay groups across both countries (Nur, 2018).

Beyond the visible similarities in customs and cuisine, the cultural relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia embodies a dynamic process of cultural hybridity. Both nations actively engage in cross-cultural exchanges, influenced by the forces of globalization, that merge local traditions with global cultural currents (Lee et al., 2020). In the context of global competition, nations are increasingly compelled to assert their cultural identities and envision themselves within the framework of an imagined community. While Indonesia and Malaysia share a common cultural foundation, diverging national aspirations and developmental trajectories may give rise to tensions. These potential frictions underscore the importance of a critical understanding of shared historical and cultural roots, particularly among younger generations, whose detachment from historical consciousness can hinder mutual appreciation and regional cohesion (Zed, 2015).

The populations of both Indonesia and Malaysia are predominantly Muslim, a demographic parallel that has led to notable similarities in religious rituals, as well as a shared heritage of Islamic art and architecture. Historic mosques and the widespread use of Islamic calligraphy stand as tangible expressions of this common religious and cultural foundation. While each country retains distinct regional and cultural characteristics, their shared Islamic identity continues to foster strong bilateral relations and mutual understanding (F. Amin, 2019).

The introduction of Islam to Indonesia and Malaysia occurred primarily through the process of *da'wa*, or the propagation of Islamic teachings (Da'wa, 2019). Etymologically, the term *da'wa* derives from the Arabic root *daʿa–yadʿū–daʿwatan*, which connotes an act of inviting, calling, or summoning. In essence, *da'wa* refers to the invitation to abstain from what is forbidden by Allah and to pursue the path of righteousness in accordance with His guidance (S. M. Amin, 2009). Within this process, the *da'i*—or Islamic preacher—plays a pivotal role. As the principal agent of religious communication, the *da'i* is responsible for transmitting Islamic teachings, promoting theological and ethical values, enjoining what is right (*amar ma'ruf*), and forbidding what is wrong (*nahi munkar*).

The Qur'anic framework emphasizes the importance of wise and compassionate communication in religious exhortation. Surah An-Nahl (16:125) urges believers to call

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others to the path of Allah with wisdom and good instruction, and to engage in discourse with kindness and respect. Similarly, Surah Ali 'Imran (3:104) calls upon the faithful to enjoin good and forbid evil, framing this as a communal obligation that leads to righteousness and ultimate success. Furthermore, Surah Ali 'Imran (3:110) reaffirms the duty of Muslims to embody moral leadership by commanding good and preventing wrongdoing, while also expressing disappointment that many among the People of the Book continue to reject divine guidance.

According to the perspective of Shihab as quoted by Amin, *da'wa* should not be reduced to a mere articulation of words or a series of invitations; rather, it represents a transformative and progressive endeavor rooted in deep conviction and a commitment to social change (S. M. Amin, 2009). Shihab emphasizes the role of *da'wa* in advancing a peaceful and inclusive understanding of Islam, particularly in countering widespread misconceptions about the faith (Rahmah & Aslamiah, 2023). Similarly, Modibbo (2017) views *da'wa* as a powerful instrument for both the propagation of Islamic teachings and the facilitation of social transformation. As an integrative process, *da'wa* calls individuals to embrace the path of Allah while instilling Islamic values across spiritual, moral, and practical domains of life (Muslim, 2022). This holistic orientation encourages personal and collective awareness toward a more ethical and purposeful existence.

One of the central challenges confronting *da'wa* in the contemporary era is the increasing cultural and religious pluralism that has emerged through globalization. The global exchange of information and values has intensified diversity in belief systems and worldviews, necessitating a nuanced and inclusive approach to religious communication. Preachers must be equipped with a deep understanding of this diversity to ensure that *da'wa* messages are conveyed respectfully and effectively. Alwi (2020) argues that impactful audience engagement in *da'wa* requires a multidisciplinary framework and empirical grounding. In line with this, Nuwairah (2021) underscores the importance of strategic planning prior to conducting *da'wa* activities, especially in responding to the sociocultural complexities of globalization. Arif et al. (2022) further highlight that *da'wa* efforts must align with contemporary societal trends and the evolving challenges posed by digital culture. The rapid development of information technology and the ubiquity of social media have added new layers of complexity, enabling the swift spread of content that may contradict Islamic values. Consequently, preachers in both Indonesia and Malaysia are increasingly required to adopt context-sensitive, technologically adaptive *da'wa* strategies.

Historically, the spread of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago began in the 13th century, facilitated by transregional maritime trade networks, particularly through Muslim merchants from Gujarat, Persia, and the Arab world. The religion was disseminated gradually and peacefully via coastal trading hubs and was institutionalized through Islamic polities such as Samudera Pasai, Demak, and Aceh. The Walisongo (the nine saints) played a vital role in localizing Islam through cultural accommodation, pedagogical outreach, and syncretic adaptation (F. Amin, 2019). In contrast, Islam

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entered the Malay Peninsula as early as the 12th century and gained formal state endorsement following the conversion of the Malacca Sultanate in the 15th century. This early integration of Islam into the political and legal systems laid the groundwork for a more centralized, state-oriented approach to *da'wa* in Malaysia (Majid & Marlon, 2016). These distinct historical pathways continue to shape the contemporary paradigms, institutional structures, and strategic orientations of *da'wa* in both countries.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative methodology based on library research to examine the *da'wa* communication models utilized by Islamic preachers in Indonesia and Malaysia (Moleong, 2007). The analysis focuses on several key dimensions: the communicative approaches adopted, the types of media employed, and the strategic methods used in the delivery of *da'wa* messages. Furthermore, the study explores the contextual factors that shape these communication models, including cultural, social, and historical influences, as well as the transformative impact of globalization on preacher–audience interactions. By critically assessing the modes and mechanisms of religious communication in both countries, the study seeks to offer a comprehensive understanding of how *da'wa* is conceptualized, adapted, and practiced in two nations that share significant cultural and historical commonalities. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on Islamic communication by elucidating the dynamics and challenges of contemporary *da'wa* within the Southeast Asian context.

In this study, data collection was conducted through an extensive review of relevant academic literature, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, and historical records that discuss *da'wa* practices in Indonesia and Malaysia. The library research method allows for a critical examination of secondary sources, which serve as the primary data set for analyzing the communication models used by preachers in both countries. This approach is particularly suitable for understanding conceptual frameworks, tracing historical trajectories, and identifying recurring themes in the discourse of Islamic preaching. By engaging with a wide range of scholarly perspectives, the study aims to construct a comprehensive analytical narrative that is both theoretically grounded and contextually rich.

Data analysis was carried out using qualitative content analysis, which involves systematically categorizing and interpreting textual data to uncover patterns, meanings, and relationships. This analytical method enables the identification of key themes related to communicative approaches, media usage, and the socio-cultural influences that shape *da'wa* strategies. Special attention was given to cross-country comparisons, allowing for the exploration of both shared and divergent characteristics in the *da'wa* models of Indonesia and Malaysia. The interpretative nature of this method ensures that the findings are not only descriptive but also explanatory, offering insights into how Islamic communication adapts to diverse environments and contemporary challenges.

Results and Discussion

Da'wa holds a central position in the life of Muslim communities, serving as a transformative process for shaping both individual character and societal norms in alignment with Islamic values (Ishaq, 2022). Its significance transcends purely religious functions, extending into social, ethical, and cultural domains. As a comprehensive practice, *da'wa* entails concrete actions such as enjoining good, forbidding evil, offering moral guidance, and delivering messages of hope—each rooted in the ethical and theological framework of Islam. At its core, *da'wa* is concerned with transmitting Islamic teachings, principles, and legal norms to individuals, groups, and broader society, with the ultimate aim of fostering a harmonious, peaceful, and morally upright communal life (Muslim, 2022). It is fundamentally anchored in the primary sources of Islamic knowledge—namely, the Qur'an and the Sunnah—which serve as the guiding reference points for Muslim conduct and worldview (N. Amin, 2022).

In this capacity, *da'wa* operates not only as a religious obligation but also as a means of preserving and reinforcing the Islamic way of life at all levels of social organization, from the family unit to the larger public sphere (Musmuallim et al., 2021). The effectiveness of *da'wa* is inherently linked to the strategic use of communication, which now encompasses a variety of media platforms, including mosques, traditional religious gatherings, social media, and digital technologies (Aslan & Pong, 2023). Rather than being limited to the conventional binary of promoting virtue and rejecting vice, *da'wa* embodies a holistic process of spiritual formation and ethical transformation, guiding individuals toward internalizing Islamic principles in their daily lives and public engagement (Zulkarnaini, 2019).

One of the primary rationales behind the urgency of *da'wa* lies in its theological imperative: the obligation of Muslims to communicate and embody the teachings of Islam. This responsibility is clearly articulated in the Qur'an: *"And thus We have made you a just and balanced community that you may be witnesses over mankind and the Messenger may be a witness over you"* (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 143). This verse emphasizes the moral accountability of Muslims as conveyors and exemplars of divine guidance in the world.

Furthermore, *da'wa* functions as a moral discourse that reinforces social cohesion through the promotion of universal ethical values such as justice, integrity, compassion, and empathy. By integrating these principles into the public sphere, *da'wa* contributes significantly to the cultivation of a virtuous society characterized by ethical awareness and mutual respect. In this way, it plays a pivotal role in supporting peace-building, social welfare, and the common good (Zulfikar, 2022).

The urgency of *da'wa* is closely tied to the formation of individual Muslim character, as it serves as a vehicle for instilling core Islamic values such as patience (*ṣabr*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), and sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*). Through the transmission of these principles, *da'wa* contributes to the development of resilient, ethically grounded individuals who are capable of navigating life's complexities with spiritual fortitude and

moral clarity. This internalization of religious values plays a foundational role in shaping a strong Muslim identity that is aligned with both faith and reason.

In addition to its individual-level impact, *da'wa* assumes a strategic function in responding to contemporary global challenges. In an age marked by rapid globalization, digital connectivity, and the proliferation of competing worldviews, Islamic values are increasingly confronted with ideologies and cultural patterns that may conflict with the ethical framework of Islam. In this context, *da'wa* functions as a safeguard for maintaining the authenticity of Islamic teachings. By facilitating a deeper engagement with religious sources, *da'wa* reinforces the integrity of Islamic principles amid shifting sociocultural landscapes and helps Muslims remain anchored to their theological and moral heritage.

Moreover, modern reformist scholars such as Muhammad Abduh have emphasized the intellectual dimension of *da'wa*, particularly its role in addressing philosophical and existential inquiries. *Da'wa* provides interpretive tools and guidance for understanding fundamental questions concerning human purpose, existence, and the relationship between humanity and the Divine (Ayyasi & Ariyadri, 2023). As such, *da'wa* functions not only as a means of religious instruction but also as a source of spiritual and intellectual nourishment that supports the development of a reflective and purpose-driven religious life.

At the social level, *da'wa* contributes significantly to fostering communal harmony and constructive intergroup relations. It promotes values such as tolerance, mutual respect, and cooperation—values that are essential in mitigating conflict and strengthening social cohesion in diverse societies. By disseminating a contextualized and compassionate understanding of Islam, *da'wa* can play a pivotal role in reducing interreligious tensions and cultivating a more inclusive and peaceful societal order.

The importance of *da'wa* is further underscored by the example of Prophet Muhammad and his companions, whose approach to preaching exemplified sincerity, patience, and empathy. The Prophet's success in transforming a fragmented and morally declining Arab society into a cohesive and ethically driven community remains a powerful model for contemporary *da'wa* initiatives. His legacy illustrates that enduring change is possible through principled communication, spiritual depth, and unwavering commitment to justice and compassion.

Advancements in information and communication technology have significantly expanded the reach and impact of *da'wa*, enabling its dissemination through a wide array of digital platforms. Contemporary preachers increasingly utilize social media, podcasts, and video-sharing platforms such as YouTube to deliver religious messages in ways that are engaging, accessible, and contextually relevant. These technologies allow for more personalized and dynamic modes of communication that resonate with diverse audiences, particularly younger generations. However, while embracing new media formats, it is imperative that the substance of *da'wa* remains anchored in the core ethical and

theological principles of Islam, ensuring that innovation in form does not result in deviation in content.

The role of *da'wa* in Islamic education is likewise of critical importance. Accurate and comprehensive religious literacy is essential for enabling Muslims to practice their faith with both understanding and integrity. Educational institutions and *da'wa*-oriented organizations bear the responsibility of providing structured, contemporary, and context-sensitive programs that address both classical and modern challenges facing the Muslim community. A collaborative partnership between religious scholars (*ulama*) and Muslim intellectuals or scientists is especially vital in this regard. Such interdisciplinary cooperation can produce integrated frameworks and intellectually robust narratives that respond effectively to philosophical, theological, and ethical questions in the modern era.

A holistic understanding of the urgency of *da'wa*—across spiritual, intellectual, educational, and technological dimensions—encourages a collective sense of responsibility among Muslims. The duty to spread the message of Islam with grace, wisdom, and compassion is not exclusive to religious professionals but is incumbent upon every believer. Each Muslim, regardless of their profession or social role, has the potential to contribute positively to society through exemplary conduct and the ethical transmission of Islamic values (Zulfikar, 2022). In doing so, *da'wa* becomes a universal mandate that unites the Muslim community in its aspiration to embody and communicate the transformative essence of Islam in a globalized world.

Da'wa Communication Theory

Within the conceptual framework of *da'wa communication*, the interrelation between communication theory and Islamic proselytization is emphasized as a foundational mechanism through which religious messages are conveyed. *Da'wa*—a central tenet of Islamic practice—involves inviting individuals to follow the path prescribed by Allah. In this context, communication functions not merely as a technical tool but as a vital epistemological medium for transmitting religious values and teachings. As articulated by Muhtadi (2012), communication serves as the primary conduit in *da'wa*, facilitating the exchange of meaning between the communicator (*da'i*) and the communicant (*mad'u*) through various media channels adapted to specific audiences and contexts.

At the theoretical level, *da'wa communication* comprises several key components, as detailed by Samsul and Romli (2013). First, the communicator—typically a preacher or *muballigh*—serves as the source of the *da'wa* message. The communicant, who may include individual Muslims or the broader society, functions as the recipient of that message. The content of *da'wa* is derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah and is designed to influence attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors in accordance with Islamic teachings. Media serve as the channels through which the message is conveyed, ranging from face-to-face communication to mass media and digital platforms. The communicative

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context—shaped by environmental, cultural, and technological factors—plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of *da'wa* transmission.

For *da'wa* to be effective, its messages must be clear, theologically accurate, and contextually relevant to the communicant's socio-cultural and psychological conditions. The selection of media must align with the characteristics of the target audience and the broader communicative setting. In the digital age, communicators must also consider technological accessibility and cultural sensibilities when choosing between traditional and digital media. Furthermore, successful *da'wa* strategies require preachers to adapt their methods based on the medium used—whether through direct interpersonal engagement or through mediated platforms such as television, radio, or social media.

Crucially, the characteristics of both the *da'i* and the *mad'u* significantly influence the communication dynamic. The effectiveness of *da'wa* is largely contingent upon the *da'i*'s communicative competence, which includes clarity, persuasiveness, empathy, and contextual awareness. Building trust is essential; a communicator must exhibit sincerity, integrity, and openness to foster meaningful dialogue. A *da'i* who is knowledgeable in communication theory, psychology, and persuasion techniques is more likely to gain credibility and receptivity among audiences. Likewise, preachers who demonstrate creativity and media literacy—particularly in leveraging social media—tend to achieve greater impact in disseminating Islamic messages across diverse and contemporary audiences.

On the side of the communicant, several psychological and cognitive factors critically influence the reception and internalization of *da'wa* messages. One of the most significant is openness—defined as the willingness of the communicant to engage with and reflect upon the religious message being delivered. A higher degree of openness facilitates greater cognitive processing, emotional receptivity, and ultimately, behavioral change. Motivation is another key determinant; when a communicant possesses strong intrinsic or extrinsic motivation to seek religious knowledge or spiritual growth, the likelihood of positive engagement with *da'wa* content increases substantially. Additionally, the communicant's prior knowledge and understanding of Islamic teachings shape how *da'wa* messages are interpreted and implemented. Individuals with a sound grasp of Islamic principles are more likely to accept and act upon religious exhortations, whereas those with limited knowledge—or negative perceptions of Islam—may resist or misinterpret even well-crafted *da'wa* efforts. In such cases, pre-existing biases or misconceptions can act as significant barriers, even among nominally Muslim audiences.

Media selection is another pivotal aspect in determining the effectiveness of *da'wa communication*. Each medium—whether traditional, digital, or hybrid—must be strategically chosen to align with the demographic, cultural, and cognitive characteristics of the target audience. The appropriateness of the medium should correspond not only to the content of the message but also to the communicant's media literacy and accessibility. Cultural context is particularly influential; preachers must tailor their *da'wa* approaches to the local socio-cultural environment in order to avoid dissonance or irrelevance. For

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instance, discussing urban societal issues in a rural context may hinder message acceptance due to contextual incongruity. Understanding cultural sensitivity ensures that *da'wa* messages are framed in a way that resonates with the lived experiences of the audience.

In this regard, the intelligent and ethical use of technology significantly enhances the scope and appeal of *da'wa*. Digital platforms such as websites, podcasts, and social media not only increase the accessibility of religious content but also provide interactive and personalized experiences for users. When employed thoughtfully, these tools can bridge generational and geographical divides, thus amplifying the reach and relevance of *da'wa*. As Rahmawati (2021) argues, the application of *da'wa communication theory*—when strategically integrated with technological literacy and contextual awareness—can generate a lasting and meaningful impact on religious education and spiritual development. Therefore, the strategic alignment between message, medium, and audience is essential for achieving the objectives of effective and sustainable *da'wa*.

In the context of communication theory, a model serves as a conceptual tool that simplifies and represents complex processes. In a broader academic sense, the term "model" refers to a symbolic or systematic representation of an object, process, or idea. Cangara (as cited in Wiryanto, 2005) defines a communication model as an abstract yet structured illustration that captures the potential dynamics of a communication process, often employed to facilitate comprehension of theoretical constructs. Similarly, Arni Muhammad emphasizes that communication models depict the interrelationships among various communication components, enabling scholars and practitioners to visualize how messages are transmitted, received, and processed within specific contexts.

Da'wa communication—as a subfield within Islamic communication studies—is defined as the process of transmitting religious messages derived from the Qur'an and Hadith from a *daʿi* (communicator) to a *madʿu* (communicant), with the intent of influencing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in accordance with Islamic teachings. As articulated by Muhtadi (2012), *da'wa communication* encompasses not only the transmission of knowledge but also the facilitation of internalization, practice, and defense of Islamic values. Accordingly, a *da'wa communication model* can be conceptualized as a systematic representation of the methods, media, and interpersonal dynamics involved in religious messaging aimed at individual or collective transformation. This model thus serves as a guiding framework for understanding how *da'wa* is operationalized through structured interaction.

Within this framework, the *da'wa communication model* includes key components such as message content, delivery method, media selection, and audience characteristics. The model is not limited to verbal expression but also accounts for non-verbal cues, symbolic interaction, and contextual adaptation. Muhtadi (2012) further asserts that the ultimate objective of *da'wa communication* is to realign individual and societal conduct with the moral and spiritual tenets of Islam, making the strategic design of the communication model essential for its effectiveness. The model also provides a lens

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through which preachers can evaluate and adjust their communicative practices based on the sociocultural, psychological, and technological conditions of the target audience.

Moreover, the role of the communicator is central to the success of *da'wa communication*. A preacher must demonstrate not only technical competence in delivering messages but also interpersonal qualities such as trustworthiness, empathy, and openness toward the communicant's perspectives. Mutual familiarity and emotional resonance between the *da'i* and *mad'u* enhance the reception of religious messages and foster an environment conducive to spiritual dialogue and behavioral change. Thus, a robust *da'wa communication model* incorporates both formal and interpersonal dimensions of communication, recognizing that message effectiveness is contingent upon the relational quality between the parties involved. Understanding these multifaceted dynamics allows *da'is* to design communication strategies that are more targeted, inclusive, and responsive to the specific needs of the communities they seek to engage.

Indonesian and Malaysian Da'wa Communication Models

Based on the author's observations of relevant literature and media sources, *da'wa communication* models employed by preachers in Indonesia and Malaysia integrate multiple modalities, including interpersonal communication, mass communication, and digital media engagement. Interpersonal communication, in particular, constitutes a foundational component of *da'wa*, referring to direct, face-to-face interactions between preachers (*da'i*) and their audiences. This approach emphasizes relational proximity, allowing for the construction of trust and emotional resonance, which are critical for the effective transmission of religious messages.

In the Indonesian context, *da'wa* has evolved into a prominent social phenomenon, with numerous well-known preachers regularly delivering sermons and religious lectures (*pengajian*) at mosques, community gatherings, and televised or streamed religious events. These figures, often regarded as both spiritual leaders and public intellectuals, are instrumental in shaping religious discourse in public life (Amal, 2021). One of the hallmarks of their communicative approach is the cultivation of personal connections with the audience. By participating in social, religious, and humanitarian initiatives, these preachers demonstrate solidarity with the everyday realities of their communities, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy and relevance of their message.

Moreover, popular preachers in Indonesia often design their *da'wah* content to reflect relatable life experiences, making Islamic teachings more accessible and emotionally resonant. Research by Hoesterey (2016) in his ethnographic study on celebrity preachers in Indonesia, particularly Aa Gym and Ustadz Yusuf Mansur, demonstrates how preachers employ vernacular language, storytelling techniques, and personal anecdotes to forge emotional bonds with their audiences. These preachers often draw upon familiar cultural idioms and locally understood metaphors to present Islamic values in ways that align with the everyday struggles of ordinary Muslims. This strategy bridges the gap between abstract theological concepts and tangible life situations—such

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as family responsibilities, economic hardship, or moral dilemmas—thereby enhancing the relevance and applicability of religious guidance.

Such contextualized *da'wah* is also evidenced in the sermons of contemporary preachers like Ustadz Abdul Somad and Ustadz Hanan Attaki, who use relatable examples from youth culture, marriage life, and social media to communicate religious messages to a younger generation. According to Latief (2018), the popularity of these figures is rooted not merely in their religious authority but in their ability to speak the "language of the people," employing humor, empathy, and lived realities in their preaching. This reflects a broader trend in Indonesian Islam toward *dakwah pop*, a movement characterized by a convergence of religion, entertainment, and media engagement (Retsikas, 2017).

By providing guidance that is both spiritually rooted and pragmatically relevant, these preachers foster a model of *da'wah* that is not only doctrinal but also pastoral and empathetic. In doing so, they embody the Qur'anic ideal of *mawʿiẓah ḥasanah*—gentle exhortation and wise counsel—as outlined in Surah An-Nahl (16:125). This alignment between scriptural ideals and socially grounded communication techniques allows *da'wah* to serve as a transformative and inclusive practice in contemporary Indonesian society.

A similar approach is evident in Malaysia, where popular *da'i* such as Ustaz Ebit Lew and Ustaz Azhar Idrus have emerged as influential religious communicators by integrating Islamic teachings with everyday Malaysian realities. These preachers utilize a mix of Malay colloquial expressions, emotionally evocative storytelling, and references to common social experiences to deliver *da'wah* messages that are both relevant and accessible. Ustaz Ebit Lew, for example, is well known for his emotionally charged outreach missions—such as supporting the poor, helping victims of domestic abuse, or offering aid to non-Muslims during crises—which are widely disseminated through his social media platforms (Mohamed & Othman, 2021). His style reflects a pastoral model of *da'wah* rooted in empathy and social action, combining verbal preaching with visible acts of compassion. This has not only increased his appeal but also strengthened *da'wah* as a vehicle for social solidarity.

Research by Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid (2020) indicates that contemporary Malaysian *da'wah* is undergoing a shift toward emotional resonance and humanitarian engagement, particularly among younger urban Muslims. This emotionalization of *da'wah* communication is reinforced by digital platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, which allow preachers to create intimate and interactive spaces for faith-based dialogue. The affective tone of these messages is critical in an era where traditional authority is being renegotiated, and religiosity is increasingly shaped by experiential and performative expressions (Hew, 2018).

Furthermore, the structured religious ecosystem in Malaysia—where state religious councils regulate Islamic discourse—has enabled certain preachers to receive institutional support, which amplifies their outreach. However, this institutionalization also means that

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popular *da'i* must balance religious authenticity with state-endorsed narratives, thereby navigating a delicate space between public popularity and theological legitimacy (Hamid, 2020). Despite this, the trend shows that preachers who integrate Islamic ethics with concrete social engagement tend to garner stronger public trust and influence, making *da'wah* more impactful in addressing contemporary moral and social issues.

The construction of personal rapport between preacher and audience significantly enhances the effectiveness of *da'wa*. A preacher's active involvement in communal life, combined with an inclusive and context-aware mode of communication, facilitates deeper cognitive and emotional engagement with Islamic teachings. In this sense, Indonesian preachers do not merely function as conveyors of doctrine but as empathetic guides who internalize and address the sociocultural realities of their congregants.

In the Malaysian context, interpersonal *da'wa* communication similarly emphasizes relational and emotional proximity. However, it often takes the form of informal, dialogic engagement, where preachers adopt a conversational tone and encourage reciprocal dialogue with the audience (Amiripana, 2023). By employing casual language and demonstrating attentiveness to the everyday concerns of their congregants, Malaysian preachers aim to foster a more approachable and participatory atmosphere. This culturally attuned style of communication reflects a strategic adaptation to local sensibilities, enabling the *da'wa* message to resonate more authentically within the community.

The interpersonal approach to *da'wa* communication in Malaysia is characterized by distinct cultural and rhetorical features, particularly through the adoption of casual language and dialogic interaction. Preachers in this context tend to utilize an informal and conversational communication style aimed at reducing the perceived distance between the *da'i* (preacher) and the *mad'u* (audience). This approach is designed to foster emotional proximity and relational trust, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and receptivity of the *da'wa* message.

The deliberate use of casual or vernacular language by Malaysian preachers reflects an intentional strategy to bridge the gap between the formal and often technical language of Islamic theology and the everyday discourse of the general public. By employing linguistic registers that are more familiar and accessible, preachers create an inclusive communicative environment in which religious teachings are perceived as relevant and attainable for all, regardless of educational attainment or social standing. This language adaptation plays a crucial role in demystifying religious content and promoting engagement across diverse audiences.

Furthermore, the dialogical nature of interpersonal *da'wa* in Malaysia positions the audience not as passive recipients but as active participants in the communicative exchange. Preachers prioritize listening, empathy, and mutual understanding, thereby encouraging open dialogue that allows for the articulation of personal concerns, questions, and interpretations. Such a two-way communication model transforms *da'wa* from a monologic sermon into a participatory and interactive process, fostering deeper cognitive and emotional involvement from the audience. As noted by Amiripana (2023),

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emotional appeal forms a significant component of this model; preachers deliberately cultivate personal and affective bonds with their listeners, enabling the religious message to resonate on both spiritual and psychological levels.

This relationally grounded model of *da'wa* is underpinned by a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural context and emotional realities of the target audience. By tailoring their messages to reflect the everyday experiences, aspirations, and anxieties of their listeners, Malaysian preachers are able to enhance the relevance and applicability of Islamic teachings, thus encouraging positive behavioral transformation within a localized framework of meaning.

In parallel, Indonesia has seen a rapid expansion in the use of digital platforms as a vehicle for *da'wa* communication. The widespread adoption of social media and video-sharing channels such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook has allowed preachers to disseminate religious content to a much broader and more diverse audience. This digital shift enables asynchronous communication—allowing followers to access sermons, religious lectures, and motivational content at any time—which significantly increases the reach and flexibility of *da'wa* efforts in contemporary society.

In addition to digital media, mass communication models in Indonesia also incorporate interactive formats such as live question-and-answer sessions, televised panel discussions, and interviews with religious scholars. These formats not only facilitate public engagement with Islamic teachings but also create discursive spaces in which complex religious and social issues can be explored. Such engagement allows for a dynamic interaction between scriptural interpretation and contemporary societal concerns, enriching both public understanding and the relevance of religious discourse.

Similarly, in Malaysia, mass-mediated *da'wa* involves the continued use of traditional media forms such as religious columns in newspapers, Islamic magazines, and print publications authored by well-known preachers. These forms are often complemented by online platforms, including blogs and official religious websites, which serve to expand the accessibility of religious teachings and offer deeper thematic explorations of Islamic principles. The convergence of traditional and digital media underscores the adaptive strategies employed by Malaysian *da'is* in addressing the evolving informational needs of the Muslim public.

In the contemporary digital age, *da'wa* communication has undergone a significant transformation through the integration of social media platforms. In Indonesia, preachers actively engage with digital audiences via Instagram, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok, leveraging visual and textual content—such as images, short videos, and inspirational captions—to deliver Islamic messages to a tech-savvy and predominantly youth demographic. This shift toward digital *da'wa* reflects both a response to the communication preferences of younger generations and a strategic effort to broaden the reach of religious messages beyond conventional spaces. In Malaysia, the trend is similarly evident, with platforms such as Facebook and Instagram serving as key arenas for religious engagement. Many Malaysian preachers have cultivated sizable online

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followings, fostering virtual religious communities that transcend geographical and institutional boundaries (Rapihi, 2018). Social media thus emerges as a critical tool in modern *da'wa* communication, facilitating interactive, real-time engagement and enabling the personalization of religious content for diverse audiences.

Factors Influencing the Model of Da'wa Communication in Indonesia and Malaysia

The development of *da'wa* communication models in Indonesia and Malaysia is shaped by a constellation of interrelated factors, including cultural, social, and political dynamics. These contextual influences contribute to the distinctive forms and strategies of *da'wa* observed in each country, underscoring the complexity and heterogeneity of Islamic communication practices in Southeast Asia. Among these, the cultural context is particularly salient. Each nation possesses a rich cultural heritage that profoundly influences the mode of religious expression and reception. In Indonesia, with its over 300 ethnic groups and regional languages, *da'wa* practices are often localized. Preachers may adapt their linguistic style, rhetorical approach, and thematic focus to resonate with specific ethnic communities, thereby increasing the relatability and efficacy of their message. The pluralistic and inclusive tone of *Islam Nusantara*, a cultural-religious paradigm emphasizing local wisdom, tolerance, and syncretism, further reinforces this contextual sensitivity.

In Malaysia, while Malay culture remains predominant due to its status as the foundation of national identity, the multi-ethnic composition of society—including substantial Chinese and Indian populations—introduces its own dynamics to *da'wa* communication. Efforts to promote inclusivity and cultural sensitivity are reflected in both language use and content framing, particularly in urban and multicultural environments. Nonetheless, the centrality of Malay-Muslim identity, as institutionalized in national religious policy, tends to shape *da'wa* narratives in a more uniform and often state-aligned direction.

Religious orientation and theological interpretation also play a pivotal role in shaping *da'wa* communication. Although both Indonesia and Malaysia are majority-Muslim nations, the interpretive frameworks of Islam in each country differ in emphasis. In Indonesia, *da'wa* is often imbued with messages of pluralism, moderation, and social harmony, reflective of the *Islam Nusantara* tradition. This approach tends to highlight the compatibility between Islamic values and local cultural practices, emphasizing peaceful coexistence and interreligious dialogue. Conversely, in Malaysia, where the state promotes a more formal and legalistic interpretation of Sunni Islam, *da'wa* communication can adopt a more didactic and conservative tone, particularly in official or institutional settings.

These differences underscore the ways in which *da'wa* communication in both countries is embedded within broader socio-political matrices. The degree of state involvement, the role of religious institutions, and the influence of transnational Islamic movements further modulate how *da'wa* is conceptualized and operationalized.

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Therefore, any analysis of *da'wa* communication models in Indonesia and Malaysia must account for the multifaceted interplay between cultural diversity, religious ideology, social structure, and technological change.

Local political conditions exert a considerable influence on the formulation and implementation of *da'wa* communication models in both Indonesia and Malaysia. State policies, media regulations, and the institutional relationship between religious authorities and government agencies shape the structural framework within which religious messages are articulated and disseminated. These political frameworks not only determine the boundaries of acceptable religious discourse but also affect the degree of autonomy granted to individual preachers and Islamic institutions. For instance, restrictions surrounding the issuance of preaching permits (*tauliah*) in mosques demonstrate how political and administrative mechanisms mediate religious expression and public engagement with *da'wa* content.

The mosque, while primarily a sacred space for Muslim worship and communal prayer, also functions as a central arena for religious education and proselytization. Within this context, preachers, mosque imams, and religious lecturers serve as key actors in the dissemination of Islamic teachings. However, in both Indonesia and Malaysia, the practice of delivering *da'wa* in mosques is regulated by formal legal and administrative provisions that require preachers to obtain official permission.

In Indonesia, the regulation of mosque-based *da'wa* is governed by the Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation No. 58 of 2016 concerning the Administration of Religious Lectures in Mosques. This policy mandates that individuals seeking to conduct religious lectures (*pengajian*) in mosques must obtain prior approval from mosque management boards. Requests for permission may be submitted orally or in writing and are evaluated based on several considerations, including the relevance and social value of the intended message, the integrity and qualifications of the preacher, the thematic content, and logistical factors such as timing and venue (Tim Puslitbang Bimas Agama dan Layanan Keagamaan, 2018).

In contrast, Malaysia delegates the authority for *da'wa* regulation to state-level religious councils (*Majlis Agama Islam Negeri*, MAIN), each of which formulates and enforces its own set of criteria for issuing preaching permits. While the substantive considerations are broadly similar to those in Indonesia—including the preacher's qualifications, the relevance and orthodoxy of the content, and the appropriateness of the venue and time—Malaysia generally requires that all *tauliah* be granted formally in writing. This stricter procedural formalism reflects the country's more centralized approach to religious governance, wherein state Islamic institutions wield considerable control over religious narratives and public discourse (Majid & Marlon, 2016).

Despite these shared objectives of regulating religious discourse to maintain harmony and doctrinal consistency, notable differences persist in implementation. In Indonesia, *da'wa* authorization remains more flexible, permitting oral consent and allowing for greater community discretion in mosque management. In contrast,

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Malaysia's system emphasizes bureaucratic formality and institutional oversight, reflecting the integration of Islamic administration within the structure of the state. These regulatory variations underscore the broader political and institutional distinctions between the two countries, shaping not only the operationalization of *da'wa* but also the contours of religious authority and legitimacy within their respective national contexts.

The implementation of *da'wa* permit regulations in mosques plays a pivotal role in maintaining both the doctrinal integrity and social harmony of Muslim communities. The requirement for *tauliah* (preaching authorization) functions as a preventive mechanism to ensure that the messages delivered within mosque settings are consistent with mainstream Islamic teachings and do not contain content that incites sectarianism, intolerance, or social unrest. By controlling who may preach and what may be preached, the permit system serves as a safeguard against the dissemination of deviant ideologies or politicized interpretations of religion that could threaten communal cohesion.

Beyond its regulatory function, the *da'wa* permit system contributes to enhancing the overall quality of religious instruction in mosques. It empowers mosque management committees to assess the qualifications, moral integrity, and communicative abilities of prospective preachers. This vetting process not only raises the professional standards of those delivering religious messages but also helps ensure that *da'wa* content is both theologically sound and pedagogically appropriate. The presence of a formal permit system thus reflects a broader institutional effort by state and religious authorities in both Indonesia and Malaysia to institutionalize *da'wa* practices within frameworks of accountability, inclusivity, and doctrinal fidelity. Far from being a mere bureaucratic formality, the preaching permit serves as a critical mechanism for maintaining religious order in pluralistic societies and protecting the spiritual well-being of congregants.

In addition to political and institutional factors, globalization exerts a significant influence on the evolution of *da'wa* communication models, particularly through the proliferation of digital technologies and social media platforms. Globalization has transformed the modalities of religious communication by dismantling traditional spatial and temporal boundaries. Preachers are no longer confined to local audiences; through online platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and live-streamed sermons, they can engage with transnational Muslim publics in real time (Hamid, 2017). This shift not only expands the potential reach of *da'wa* but also introduces new challenges related to audience diversity, message consistency, and cross-cultural reception.

The global dissemination of *da'wa* messages has created an unprecedented level of exposure to religious discourses from various cultural and theological backgrounds. While this democratization of access offers opportunities for cross-border solidarity and Islamic learning, it also requires preachers to develop new competencies in media literacy, intercultural communication, and religious moderation. Consequently, *da'wa* communication in the digital era is increasingly characterized by hybridity—where traditional values are conveyed through modern tools, and where preachers must navigate between local cultural sensitivities and global expectations. The global stage thus adds a

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new dimension to *da'wa*, necessitating strategic adaptation without compromising the core tenets of Islamic teachings.

One of the most profound and visible impacts of globalization on *da'wa* communication is the integration of digital technology and social media into religious discourse. The advent of modern communication tools—including smartphones, mobile applications, and high-speed internet—has revolutionized the way *da'wa* messages are crafted, disseminated, and consumed. In particular, social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok have emerged as highly effective vehicles for conveying *da'wa* content to a vast and heterogeneous audience. The viral nature of social media allows *da'wa* messages to be transmitted instantaneously and amplified exponentially, reaching global Muslim communities far beyond traditional geographic or cultural boundaries.

Technology now plays a central role in shaping the contemporary *da'wa* communication model. In countries like Indonesia, where digital literacy and internet penetration are on the rise, preachers have increasingly embraced social media to engage with younger audiences. They creatively utilize multimedia formats—such as short videos, infographics, and interactive posts—to make Islamic teachings more accessible, relevant, and emotionally resonant. Likewise, in Malaysia, *da'wa* has become increasingly digitized, with many religious leaders and institutions adopting modern platforms to reach various segments of society. These technological interventions have democratized access to religious knowledge and transformed *da'wa* into a more participatory and dialogical process.

The digitalization of *da'wa* has also introduced a distinctly international dimension to its communication model. Online platforms transcend national borders, enabling preachers to address transnational Muslim audiences from diverse linguistic, cultural, and socio-political backgrounds. This global reach facilitates the dissemination of Islamic values to a wide-ranging audience and fosters the formation of virtual religious communities. Moreover, the responsiveness of digital media allows preachers to quickly react to current events, global crises, or religious controversies, offering interpretations or guidance that can shape public discourse across the Muslim world.

Despite its many benefits, the impact of globalization and digital technology on *da'wa* communication is not uniformly positive. The proliferation of content on social media platforms has also given rise to new challenges, including the spread of misinformation, religious sensationalism, and the propagation of radical or extremist ideologies under the guise of *da'wa*. The absence of standardized content moderation and theological oversight in online spaces increases the risk of distortion and fragmentation in religious messaging. Therefore, preachers must exercise discernment and responsibility in utilizing digital platforms. Upholding ethical communication principles, ensuring theological accuracy, and promoting messages of moderation and tolerance are essential to preserving the authenticity and integrity of *da'wa* in the digital age.

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The findings presented in this paper underscore that the *da'wa* communication models in Indonesia and Malaysia are shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, religious, social, political, and globalizing forces. These multifaceted influences reflect the heterogeneous nature of Islamic societies in both countries, where religious messaging must continuously adapt to diverse and evolving contexts. The effectiveness of *da'wa* communication, therefore, hinges not only on the theological soundness of the message but also on the preacher's ability to navigate these contextual variables with cultural sensitivity and strategic awareness.

Both Indonesia and Malaysia exhibit *da'wa* models that are dynamic and responsive to societal change, particularly in relation to cultural heterogeneity and technological advancements. The convergence of traditional religious values with modern communication tools necessitates that preachers adopt innovative approaches while remaining faithful to the core principles of Islam. Cultural factors—including ethnic diversity and local customs—interact with religious interpretations and digital technologies to influence how *da'wa* is designed, delivered, and received. This interaction forms a dynamic communicative ecosystem where *da'wa* is not a static activity, but a continuously evolving process.

Ultimately, the study reveals that culture, religion, and technology serve as the three primary pillars influencing the *da'wa* communication model in both countries. The intersection of these dimensions creates a fluid and adaptive landscape that allows *da'wa* to remain relevant in the face of globalization, modernization, and digital transformation. As such, effective *da'wa* in the contemporary era requires not only religious authority but also communicative competence, media literacy, and contextual intelligence. Future efforts to enhance *da'wa* communication should therefore prioritize interdisciplinary approaches, strategic media engagement, and deeper contextual understanding to better serve the spiritual and intellectual needs of diverse Muslim communities.

Conclusion

This study reveals that *da'wa* communication models in Indonesia and Malaysia are the result of nuanced adaptations to their respective sociocultural, religious, and technological environments. Both countries employ a variety of communication channels—including interpersonal engagement in religious gatherings, mass communication through conventional media, and increasingly, digital platforms such as social media. While notable stylistic and structural differences persist—particularly regarding institutional arrangements and cultural influences—there exists a convergent trend toward the digitalization of *da'wa*, illustrating the responsiveness of Islamic propagation to global technological shifts.

The Indonesian model of *da'wa* reflects a strong alignment with local wisdom, pluralism, and culturally embedded Islamic expressions. It draws heavily on the values of tolerance (*tasamuh*), moderation (*wasatiyyah*), and the accommodation of indigenous traditions, often through grassroots engagement. In contrast, Malaysia demonstrates a

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more centralized and institutionalized approach, where *da'wa* is systematically organized under state-sanctioned religious authorities. These distinctions reflect broader historical, political, and administrative structures that shape how Islam is articulated and disseminated within each national context.

The findings of this study reinforce the argument that *da'wa* communication cannot be treated as a one-size-fits-all enterprise. Instead, it must be understood as a dynamic, context-sensitive process that requires adaptability and creativity. In the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, preachers (*da'i*) must not only possess deep theological insight but also strong digital competencies and intercultural communication skills. Effective *da'wa* in the contemporary landscape demands the ability to synthesize religious authenticity with modern communicative forms—ensuring that the message resonates across generational, cultural, and ideological boundaries.

Moreover, the future of *da'wa* will increasingly depend on its ethical and intellectual responsiveness to contemporary challenges, such as religious extremism, misinformation, and the secularization of public spaces. Preachers are called to embody not only spiritual leadership but also social intelligence, promoting messages that foster peace, justice, inclusivity, and critical engagement. As such, *da'wa* must evolve beyond traditional preaching toward becoming a multidimensional project that integrates education, social empowerment, and digital activism.

In light of these developments, it is essential for religious institutions, universities, and *da'wa* organizations to invest in the professional development of *da'i* by providing training in communication theory, media literacy, interreligious dialogue, and sociopolitical awareness. Strengthening the theoretical and practical foundations of *da'wa* will enhance its transformative potential—not only in Indonesia and Malaysia but also in the broader Muslim world navigating the complexities of modernity. Thus, this study contributes to the growing discourse on Islamic communication by offering comparative insights and highlighting the urgent need for innovation, contextual relevance, and ethical integrity in the *da'wa* models of the 21st century.

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