

Said Nursi's Da'wah Communication Strategy and Its Relevance in the Malaysian Context

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ABSTRACT

Da'wah communication in a pluralistic society often faces challenges in ensuring that the message of Islam can be well received without creating misunderstandings or social tensions. A confrontational approach that is insensitive to the background of mad'u culture can lead to rejection and undermine social harmony. Hence, the need for a more thoughtful and persuasive approach to communication has become increasingly urgent. This study aims to analyze Badiuzzaman Said Nursi's da'wah communication strategy and its relevance in the context of Malaysia's pluralistic society. This study used a qualitative method with a content analysis approach to Rasail An-Nur. The results of the study show that Said Nursi applies da'wah communication that is wise, rational, and persuasive through a combination of verbal and non-verbal communication. His approach which emphasizes tolerance, open dialogue, and understanding of the background of mad'u was found to be in line with the needs of da'wah in Malaysia. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of adapting a more harmonious da'wah communication strategy to increase public acceptance and promote more positive interaction between religions.

Keywords - Da'wah communication, Said Nursi, persuasive communication, Rasail An-Nur, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a fundamental element that has been the link between humans since the early days of the creation of the Prophet Adam (Faridah Mohd Sairi, 2006). In Islam, communication is not just the transfer of information, but aims to convey guidance and call people back to Allah SWT. Islamic da'wah cannot be spread without effective communication (Hashim Fauzy Yaacob, 2001). The principle of communication in da'wah is also emphasized in the Quran, including in surah An-Nahl verse 125, which calls for da'wah to be conveyed with wisdom and good advice.

According to Sayyid Qutb (1996), da'wah wisely is to examine and understand the current situation and reality of the da'wah target and to be able to vary the da'wah approach to them as appropriate. Explanations and understandings that are not burdensome are also not built on extreme enthusiasm and enthusiasm so that they are outside the scope of wisdom itself. On the other hand, good advice is through gentle appeals that can penetrate into people's hearts not through threats, rebukes or humiliation for the wrongs committed due to their ignorance. This element of wisdom must be applied in the da'wah process through the application of the best and effective methodology to mad'u. Good advice and the prominence of noble morals are important in building strong human bonds with each other in an effort to bring this mad'u's feelings and interest closer to Islam.

Effective da'wah requires effective instruments and mediums. Da'wah nowadays is no longer limited to mere verbal factors but also needs to take into account the factors of da'wah materials, atmosphere, funds, target group, language skills and so on. All these aspects need to be moved in tandem to ensure that the target of da'wah can really be mastered. The old-fashioned, outdated, anti-technological image as well as the weakness of English and Mandarin as a global medium of communication need to be addressed and overcome as much as possible. This is to create preachers who are truly caliber in facing the challenges of da'wah today. Every space and facilities available must be mastered as best as possible so that the preachers are seen as relevant to the current developments (Noor Azaian, Mohd Yusof & Mohd Azul 2017).

Effective da'wah communication requires a deep understanding of the mad'u background, atmosphere and local challenges. A harsh and confrontational approach is no longer a relevant option, especially in today's information society era (Zulkiple Abd Ghani, 2001). Thus, figures such as Badiuzzaman Said Nursi became an important model that showed how da'wah communication can be combined with wisdom, communication psychology and harmonious persuasive techniques (Bakti (2021).

In the Malaysian context, Said Nursi's da'wah thinking began to gain attention because of his approach emphasizing politeness of communication, emphasis on morality and effective incorporation of verbal and non-verbal elements (Wan Rashidah Hanim (2015). This study attempts to unravel the effective da'wah communication of Badiuzzaman Said Nursi based on Rasail An-Nur and analyze its influence on the da'wah approach in Malaysia.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Challenges of Da'wah Communication in Malaysia

In the development of da'wah in Malaysia, if in the past, this da'wah platform was more synonymous with oral delivery, and face-to-face presence through the organization of specific religious programs in a place. However, now, in line with the development of the times, the ability of information technology through the use of the internet is actually able to dominate the delivery of da'wah to the Muslim community in a more different way. The advancement and luxury of multimedia tools and mediums that can color the da'wah platform in society has taken over the traditional methods of da'wah delivery. This is because, the application of the da'wah method is not enough if it only depends on the traditional method, but it needs to be in line with the situation and the conditions of the times (Samsul, 2008).

Therefore, da'wah in today's context should be more practical by using all the uslub and wasilah that exist today in an effort to develop Islam. All the methods used by the Prophet PBUH and his companions are a catalyst for the spirit of today's people so that the da'wah movement is more effective and efficient. The emergence of various da'wah domains that provide various platforms to impart knowledge is the core in the development of the personality of individuals and the Muslim community. Therefore, the use of information and communication technology through the digitization of da'wah is very important and should be utilized as well as possible (Najidah & Abu Dardaa 2013).

For example, face-to-face communication can be replaced by the application of interactive communication elements through dialogue, forums and discussions that are unlimited in time, time and location. Undoubtedly, the current excitement of the society in the aspect of digitalization has changed the current patterns and patterns of society to choose a medium that is more effective in their hearts (Fadillah et al. 2015).

Therefore, this phase can be the best space to further boost the da'wah platform in the country, especially through social media. The variety of da'wah through social media can be explored by using the facilities of facebook, twitter, youtube, or a combination of social media to ensure the sustainability of da'wah in the context of attractive delivery. Through this approach, surely the affairs of delivering da'wah are no longer limited to the feared and backward space. Even if managed with a good method through the combination of existing multimedia, it is able to emerge with a new face that is more advanced (Rahma 2014).

In addition, the challenge of da'wah communication does not only involve the acceptance of the Muslim

community, but also adaptation to the atmosphere of a pluralistic society. Misunderstandings, misinterpretations and da'wah approaches that are insensitive to socio-cultural context often cause tension (Burhanuddin Jalal et al., 2018). According to JAKIM's annual report (2022), one of the main challenges of da'wah in Malaysia is the inconsistency of the da'wah approach with the cultural and ethnic background of a pluralistic society. The approach of 'confrontational talks' and rhetoric in the form of negative labels against different parties of opinion still dominate some of the mainstream da'wah approach (Khairul Azhar Meerangani et al., 2013).

Al-Shahrani (2012) mentioned that preachers need to convey the message of faith, worship and morals based on the Islamic texts and convey them clearly (al-wuduh). Al-Wuduh requires mastery of relevant knowledge so that the target of da'wah can understand the message well. Moreover, when the preacher is required to convey the message according to the method of da'wah, namely mukhatabah al-nas 'ala qadr 'uqulihim (talking to people according to their level of thought) (Hammam Sa'id 2011). This is what Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1984) put forward, who denounced preachers who take a troublesome attitude to the target of da'wah to understand a message that should be conveyed simply. This attitude is contrary to the principle of al-taysir (easy) in preaching. However, this does not mean that the preacher can simplify religious affairs when he invites the target of da'wah to practice the teachings of Islam by saying "can take part" and "can stay part" of the other.

Another feasible approach is for preachers to show their true ability and credibility to the public. They must highlight their authority by mastering everything they want to convey so that the listener feels that they are referring to an individual who is actually worthy and authoritative in an issue. The honesty of the preacher is demanded so that he does not say something he does not know. He should not dare to say something that he does not know and does not master by using the terms or concepts of a discipline that are commonly used by his experts. Therefore, the preacher needs to immediately realize his ignorance if he talks about something that he himself does not understand. One of the signs of a person's knowledge is when he does not speak something that he does not know by using the words of people who have expertise in the field. (S. Salahudin & Zulkefli 2014).

Said Nursi's Da'wah Communication in Turkey

During the era of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's secularism, Said Nursi faced a strict ban on open da'wah. However, he uses creative da'wah communication strategies through writing and non-verbal communication such as patience and moral example (Zurcher, 2001). He realised that da'wah cannot succeed through hard confrontation, but through a thoughtful persuasive approach. As a result, Rasail An-Nur not only succeeded in conveying the message of tauhid, but also attracted thousands of followers from various backgrounds (Ichwansyah Tampubolon, 2015).

Said Nursi offers a different approach, namely through the communication of wisdom, rational explanations and constructive dialogue (Faridah Mohd Sairi, 2015). Among Said Nursi's positive approaches as recorded in the book of Rasail an-Nur himself is that he uses the approach of maslak (the path) of love, instead of based on enmity, uses the method of isbat (argumentation), iqna' (satisfying the mind and spirit), making himself mukhatab first in delivery and reprimand (he will bring reprimand to himself) in addition to appreciating what is conveyed (Said Nursi, 2021).

The same is true in da'wah through writing. The four basics of da'wah writing in Rasail an-Nur worked on by Said Nursi are similar to the four principles of knowledge found in the Quran, namely tauhid, nubuwwah (prophethood), hasyir (day of resurrection), justice of worship. Scholars also see that Said Nursi managed to preserve the identity of Islamic writing (writing the Quran, Jawi Ottoman writing) through the da'wah of his writings. Through Rasail an-Nur, he succeeded in breaking the backbone of the ideology of kufr mutlaq, namely atheism and naturalism and matarialisim (Said Nursi, 2021).

The most important contribution of Said Nursi that would like to be highlighted in this study is from the point of view of his skills and mastery in the theoretical and practical knowledge of da'wah communication, both in the elements of oral communication, non-verbal communication and persuasive communication when

delivering da'wah. Said Nursi's da'wah approach through Rasāil an-Nūr serves to renew and refresh Islam through several elements of da'wah communication, including positive action, patience and acting silently. This method is different from other approaches in the Islamic world which are usually through direct confrontation through politics and aggressive actions (Ahmad Hidayat, 2018).

According to Mehmet Ozalp (2016) and Nur Sakinah (2019), Said Nursi has discovered and mastered the appropriate communication 'tools' to persuade and attract da'wah targets. Said Nursi does not only focus on the content of da'wah like traditional scholars, but also places serious emphasis on the technical strategies of da'wah, such as the rhetorical aspects of speech, language, verbal and non-verbal persuasive da'wah, and so on. His main concern was to persuade through a number of approaches, thereby removing doubts from the minds of Muslims who were exposed to various philosophies and ideologies of thought.

According to the author of the book "Theodicy and Justice in Modern Islamic Thought", Abu Rabi (2016), the increase in the level of education worldwide, easier travel, and the increase in new communication media led to a more open society at that time, so that Rasāil an-Nūr was accepted worldwide. Meanwhile, according to Muhammad Sophy et al. (2021), the reform in education that Said Nursi championed was finally able to rival Western culture and progress. It further revives the dignity of Islam so that it can stand tall on the earth in the midst of the waves of the modern world.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using content analysis as the main method. The primary data source was Rasail An-Nur, a collection of writings by Badiuzzaman Said Nursi. Secondary sources included scholarly books, journal articles, and theses related to Said Nursi's thoughts and da'wah communication strategies.

The content analysis focused on identifying key communication principles used by Said Nursi in his writings, particularly elements of verbal, non-verbal, and persuasive communication. Thematic analysis was conducted using ATLAS.ti software to systematically code and categorize recurring themes. This approach enabled the researchers to extract patterns relevant to da'wah communication and evaluate their applicability in the Malaysian context.

Study Findings

This study found that the elements of Said Nursi's da'wah communication include verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as contextual adaptation based on the background of mad'u. In the aspect of oral communication, Said Nursi uses lectures, dialogues and spontaneous speeches that are delivered with wisdom, courtesy and uses creative analogies to attract attention and facilitate the understanding of mad'u (Faridah Mohd Sairi, 2015). His choice of soft language and persuasive approach are also key features in his verbal communication. He often presents aqli and naqli arguments along with analogies and parables to facilitate understanding, thus justifying the facts (Said Nursi, 2021).

In addition, non-verbal communication also plays an important role in Said Nursi's da'wah. Body language, facial expressions and symbolic actions are used to reinforce the message to be conveyed (Muaz, S. Salahudin & Faridah, 2023). Said Nursi's own moral example became the most effective da'wah message, where his patient, tawaduk and firm personality in principle had a profound impact on his followers. Likewise, the sincerity and honesty that bloom from the essence of Rasail An-Nur. In fact, writing became the main non-verbal medium of communication for Said Nursi, especially through his masterpiece, Rasail An-Nur, which was widespread despite the restrictions of the secular government (Zurcher, 2001).

Bakti (2021) stated that Said Nursi's communication strategy is part of an effective human development model, which in turn deserves to be emulated by all communicators, especially preachers. According to him, Said Nursi's communication idea is in line with the 'active reception model of development' which encourages the community, namely the recipients of da'wah messages to take an active role in changing their fate.

In Malaysia, Said Nursi's approach to da'wah communication has also had an impact on contemporary da'wah movements such as ABIM, IKRAM and others. The concept of wisdom-based communication and persuasive da'wah pioneered by Said Nursi is used as the main reference in supporting a pluralistic society in Malaysia. It also has a positive impact on institutions of higher learning (universities), whether among students, researchers, asatizah, as well as the public (Faridah Mohd Sairi, 2015).

Here are 5 da'wah communication strategies of Said Nursi adapted from the original book of Rasail An-Nur.

Emphasis on Mastery of Knowledge

According to Said Nursi, the way to restore the progress of Muslims is to return to the emphasis and mastery of knowledge. Mastery of knowledge is important to meet the needs of the society and restore the strength of Muslims to face the current challenges. He suggested that Muslims master religious knowledge and science to uplift their dignity and religion, through *tajdīd* (renewal) efforts in the field of education (Mohd Nasir, 2015).

Sincerity and Rejecting Popularity

In the book *al-Maktūbāt*, Said Nursi advises to seek the pleasure of Allah SWT through sincerity. If Allah SWT subsidizes, then that is the best success of da'wah in the field. And on the other hand, if Allah SWT does not accept the practice because it is not sincere, then there is no good effect on oneself (Said Nursi, 2017). Meanwhile, in the book *al-Kalīmāt*, Said Nursi states that there should be no malice, competition, and jealousy in religious affairs and the afterlife" (Said Nursi, 2020)

Choosing the Path of Safety

According to Febrina M et al. (2020), Said Nursi never acted violently and never allowed his students to react violently. He created a strong and comprehensive da'wah movement, but it was not violence-oriented. The government's strong opposition to religion versus Said Nursi's firm stance against any irregularities made Said Nursi a symbol of religious sentiment in Turkey.

Closing Shame and Maintaining Dignity

One of the main foundations of Said Nursi's da'wah is to hide one's shame. Said Nursi strongly emphasized the manners of reprimanding and advising. Among the manners practiced by Said Nursi is that he never mentions the name of the person he reprimands. On the other hand, reprimands and corrections focus on wrong views or behaviors, in general, through constructive criticism and based on knowledge and truth (Mohamad Zaidin et al., 2018).

Be Patient and Act Positively

One trait that Said Nursi is commonly seen is his ability to give a positive perspective to all things. It was as if there were no events that troubled his life or caused him to be stuck. He interpreted every event in his life through a lens of patience and positivity, which became central to his da'wah approach. What is interesting is that his explanation can comfort his heart and mind (Keskin, 2019). Said Nursi changed the mindset of the mind by giving a positive and beneficial meaning to each persecution. For example, he named the prison as '*madrasah al-yusūfiyyah*' (the school of the Prophet Yusuf AS). This allows him and his students to try to control their emotions patiently and persevere under great pressure (Edi Amin, 2018; Muhammad Sophy et al., 2021).

DISCUSSION

Wisdom-Based vs Confrontational Da'wah

Said Nursi's approach proves that wisdom-based communication is more effective than a hard approach. In Malaysia, a harsh approach often provokes polemics and distances the community from da'wah (Zulkiple Abd

Ghani, 2001). The wisdom approach prioritizes open dialogue, understanding the mad'u's perspective before punishing and prioritizing the value of love and rahmah in every message delivery. This is in line with the reality of a pluralistic society in Malaysia which requires a more cautious and prudent approach to da'wah. Said Nursi calls this approach a 'positive movement' if it has elements of clean, polite and gentle communication (Said Nursi, 2021).

Writing as a Strategic Da'wah Medium

Badiuzzaman Said Nursi made writing the main weapon of non-verbal da'wah. The works in Rasail An-Nur contain soft language, deep rational arguments and an emphasis on the logic of reason to bring mad'u closer to Islam. Said Nursi also emphasized that the da'wah approach must be in line with the current reality. Said Nursi emphasized the essence of several hadiths about the need for a Muslim to have the power of a 'weapon' comparable to the enemy's 'weapon' or better (Said Nursi, 2021).

In Malaysia, this concept can be strengthened through the use of social media as a medium of creative da'wah, in line with current technological developments (Faridah Mohd Sairi, 2015). Digital da'wah based on wisdom and rationality is able to attract young people who are inclined towards information that is interactive and logical.

Relevance in Malaysia's Multicultural Setting

Said Nursi's approach to da'wah communication which emphasizes the aspects of wisdom, understanding the socio-cultural background of mad'u, and avoiding violent confrontation is very relevant in the Malaysian context. Malaysia as a pluralistic nation with racial, religious and cultural diversity demands a method of da'wah communication that is inclusive, gentle and respectful of the sensitivities of people of various backgrounds.

Preachers in Malaysia can learn from Said Nursi's da'wah strategy who always tries to understand the background of the audience before delivering the message of da'wah. For the non-Muslim community, an approach in the form of a rational explanation of the concept of tauhid, the beauty of Islamic morality and the contribution of Muslims in the history of human civilization can open up a space for more harmonious dialogue. Said Nursi also showed how da'wah in the form of writing can touch the hearts of mad'u without causing tension (Faridah Mohd Sairi, 2015; Muaz, S. Salahudin & Faridah, 2023).

In Malaysia, da'wah movements such as ABIM, IKRAM and several Islamic NGOs have started to apply this concept of wisdom in their preacher training modules. The training that is organized not only emphasizes the mastery of religious knowledge, but also the skills of communicating prudently, strategizing and understanding the psychology and background of mad'u in depth (Siti Rozana Ghani, et.al, 2022).

Impact of Rasail An-Nur on Contemporary Malaysian Da'wah

One of Said Nursi's most valuable intellectual contributions is his collection of writings known as Rasail An-Nur. This work is not just a collection of religious writings, but a manifestation of the communication of da'wah hikmah that welcomes readers from various backgrounds with beautiful, soft and profound language.

Malaysian students who have been studying in Turkey since the 1980s and 1990s began to bring home Rasail An-Nur's work and introduce it to Malaysia. A series of seminars, workshops and brief translations of these works began to be carried out actively. The concept of da'wah through writing based on rational and heartfelt arguments has become an inspiration for campus da'wah movements and Islamic NGOs that move at the community level (Muaz, S. Salahudin & Faridah, 2023).

In today's social media era, Rasail An-Nur's approach is still relevant. Digital preachers can take inspiration from Said Nursi's writing style which does not place itself above mad'u. On the contrary, he approaches the reader as an ordinary person who also seeks the truth. This approach is in line with the need to approach the younger generation who tend to value bilateral dialogue and open submission without a judgmental element.

Comparison of Said Nursi's Da'wah Approach with Hasan al-Banna and Abul A'la Maududi

To understand the strength of Said Nursi's da'wah communication approach, it is appropriate to compare him with two of the great figures of contemporary da'wah, namely Hasan al-Banna and Abul A'la Maududi.

- Hasan al-Banna emphasized the development of an organized and disciplined da'wah organization through intensive training such as usrah and halaqah. Hasan al-Banna's communication tends towards the formation of a fighting spirit among the members of the Muslim Brotherhood, making his approach semi-collective with the aim of forming a cadre of preachers in the organization (Ahmad Syafiq, Muhammad Talhah & Muhammad Hazwan, 2022).
- Abul A'la Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan, emphasized da'wah based on discourse of thought and criticism of Western ideology. He uses an approach to writing that is intellectually confrontational, highlighting the conflict between Islam and Western secular thought (Sheikh Javaid Ayub, 2020).

In contrast to these two figures, Said Nursi opted for a gentler and wiser approach, even under pressure from the secular regime. Her main focus is to highlight the beauty of tauhid, the oneness of Allah, and the truth of Islam through logical and introspective explanations as explained earlier such as the emphasis on prophetic wisdom, the day of resurrection, worship and justice (Faridah Mohd Sairi, 2015; Sheikh Javaid Ayub, 2020). This approach makes his da'wah more relevant to Malaysia's pluralistic society which values dialogue, tolerance and respect between religions.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Badiuzzaman Said Nursi's da'wah communication strategy, anchored in wisdom, rational discourse, and non-confrontational methods, is highly relevant to Malaysia's pluralistic and multireligious society. His model, which integrates verbal, non-verbal, and written communication, presents a flexible and humane approach to spreading Islamic values in a context where sensitivity, inclusivity, and dialogue are vital. These findings support the idea that a shift from confrontational rhetoric to persuasive, ethical, and emotionally intelligent da'wah is essential in the modern era.

As a recommendation for future research, scholars could explore how Said Nursi's communication principles can be operationalized in digital da'wah campaigns, particularly through social media and youth-targeted outreach programs. More empirical studies are also needed to assess the long-term impact of Nursi-inspired da'wah models in Malaysia's institutional and grassroots contexts.

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