

## ISLAMIC DA'WAH AND LOCAL WISDOM AS A STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL HARMONY IN MUSLIM COMMUNITIES: A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY IN INDONESIA

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the strategic role of Islamic da'wah integrated with local wisdom in fostering social harmony within Muslim communities across diverse regions of Indonesia. In an era marked by rising religious polarization, digital misinformation, and socio-cultural fragmentation, the integration of Islamic communicative traditions with indigenous values offers a sustainable and contextually grounded approach to communal peace-building. Employing a qualitative phenomenological design, data were gathered from 42 participants across five Indonesian provinces through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentary analysis over a 12-month period (January–December 2023). Thematic analysis guided by the framework of Moustakas (1994) was used to interpret participants' lived experiences. The findings reveal four interconnected themes: (1) the organic embedding of local values such as gotong royong (collective cooperation), musyawarah (deliberative consensus), and tepo seliro (mutual empathy) into da'wah discourses; (2) the pivotal role of ulama (religious scholars) and mosque institutions as socially trusted mediators; (3) culturally adaptive da'wah as a preventive mechanism against religious extremism; and (4) significant intergenerational and digital challenges confronting contemporary practitioners. This study demonstrates that local wisdom-based da'wah is not merely a rhetorical adaptation but a structural strategy for building inclusive, moderate, and harmonious Muslim communities. The findings carry theoretical implications for Islamic communication theory, sociology of religion, and multicultural education, while offering practical recommendations for religious institutions and policy makers.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Muslim societies in Southeast Asia face an intricate convergence of pressures: rapid urbanization, digital disruption of religious authority, the global resurgence of puritanical religious movements, and the erosion of traditional communal bonds. Indonesia, as the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation with over 237 million Muslims (BPS, 2020), represents both the complexity and the richness of Islamic lived experience within a multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious national context. Indonesian Islam has historically been characterized by its tolerance, adaptability, and capacity to coexist peacefully with diverse local cultures a characteristic often described by scholars as *Islam Nusantara* or the distinctly Archipelagic expression of Islamic faith (van Bruinessen, 2013; Wahid, 2001). Islamic da'wah understood broadly as the communicative and transformative effort to convey, practice, and embody Islamic teachings within a given social context has long functioned as a powerful mechanism for social integration and community building in Indonesia. Far from being limited to formal religious oratory, da'wah in its broadest sense encompasses interpersonal counsel, cultural performance, social service, and community mobilization (Ilaihi, 2010; Pimay, 2005). When practiced in harmony with local wisdom traditions, da'wah becomes a culturally resonant medium that speaks to the heart of community life without provoking the alienation or resistance that sometimes accompanies externally imposed religious frameworks.

The concept of local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) refers to the accumulated body of knowledge, practices, values, and beliefs that a community has developed over generations in response to its ecological, social, and spiritual environment (Sartini, 2004; Wagiran, 2012). In Indonesian Muslim communities, local wisdom manifests in a diverse array of cultural practices and values from the Javanese principles of *gotong royong* (collective cooperation) and *rukun* (social harmony) to the Minangkabau tradition of *musyawarah* (deliberative consensus), the Sundanese ethic of *silih asah, silih asih, silih asuh* (mutual sharpening, loving, and nurturing), and the broader Nusantara value of *tepo seliro* (empathetic sensitivity to others' feelings). These value systems are not merely cultural artifacts; they constitute active frameworks for social regulation, conflict resolution, and communal identity.

Despite the longstanding coexistence of Islamic da'wah and local wisdom in Indonesian Muslim life, the contemporary period has introduced significant stresses. The proliferation of digital media has enabled the rapid dissemination of scripturalist and sometimes exclusivist religious interpretations that regard local cultural practices with suspicion or outright hostility (Hasan, 2009; Noorhaidi, 2012). Simultaneously, the weakening of traditional community structures and the migration of young people to urban centers have attenuated the transmission of local wisdom from one generation to the next. These dynamics create conditions in which social harmony is increasingly fragile and the integrative function of contextual da'wah becomes more vital than ever.

The academic literature on this intersection remains underdeveloped in several respects. While scholars have examined Islamic da'wah (Ilaihi, 2010; Pimay, 2005), local (Sartini, 2004; Wagiran, 2012), and social harmony (Muhtarom, 2017; Suryana, 2011). as separate fields, studies that systematically analyze the triadic relationship among da'wah, local wisdom, and social harmony through rigorous qualitative methodologies are rare. This study aims to fill that gap by providing a richly textured, empirically grounded account of how Muslim communities across Indonesia are constructing and deploying local wisdom-based da'wah as a strategy for social harmony.

The central problem addressed by this study is the tension between globalizing, scripturalist religious impulses and the culturally embedded, locally adaptive traditions that have historically sustained social harmony in Indonesian Muslim communities. This tension manifests in practical challenges for da'wah practitioners: How should Islamic communicators navigate between fidelity to religious orthodoxy and sensitivity to cultural particularity? How can local wisdom be mobilized as a resource for promoting moderation and tolerance without

reducing Islamic teaching to mere cultural relativism? And what institutional and personal strategies are most effective in sustaining local wisdom-based da'wah in the face of digital disruption and intergenerational change?

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- How is local wisdom systematically integrated into Islamic da'wah practices in selected Indonesian Muslim communities?
- What roles does local wisdom-based da'wah play in promoting and sustaining social harmony within these communities?
- How do diverse community members religious leaders, youth, women, and community elders perceive and respond to culturally adaptive Islamic da'wah?
- What contextual challenges and facilitating factors shape the effectiveness of local wisdom-based da'wah as a social harmony strategy?

This study aims to: (1) analyze the mechanisms through which local wisdom is integrated into Islamic da'wah activities; (2) examine the substantive contribution of contextual da'wah to social harmony; (3) explore the diversity of community responses to culturally adaptive religious communication; and (4) identify challenges and enablers that practitioners navigate in sustaining local wisdom-based da'wah in contemporary Indonesia.

Theoretically, this study contributes to Islamic communication theory by extending the concept of da'wah beyond persuasion toward a framework of cultural mediation and social harmony-building. It also contributes to the sociology of religion by demonstrating how religious practice is shaped by and shapes local cultural ecologies. Practically, the findings offer actionable guidance for mosque organizations, Islamic educational institutions, governmental religious affairs ministries, and civil society organizations engaged in promoting religious moderation and social cohesion.

## B. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Islamic Da'wah: Conceptual Foundations and Contemporary Dimensions

The Arabic root d-'w (to call, invite, or summon) underlies the Islamic concept of da'wah, which in classical theological usage refers primarily to the invitation to embrace Islam and fulfill its religious obligations. However, contemporary Islamic scholarship has substantially broadened this concept to encompass a wide spectrum of communicative, educational, social, and cultural activities oriented toward the moral and spiritual upliftment of both individual Muslims and their communities (Ilaihi, 2010; Pimay, 2005; Saputra, 2011). This broader conception is particularly well-developed in Indonesian Islamic discourse, where organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah have historically championed contextually sensitive da'wah approaches tailored to the social needs and cultural sensibilities of diverse Indonesian communities (Muhtarom, 2017; van Bruinessen, 2013).

Key dimensions of contemporary da'wah theory include: the identification of da'i (callers or communicators), mad'u (audiences), materi (content or message), uslub (method or approach), and wasilah (medium or channel) as analytically distinct but interrelated components of the da'wah process (Ilaihi, 2010). Scholars have also examined the distinction between da'wah bil lisan (oral preaching), da'wah bil hal (da'wah by exemplary action), and da'wah bil qalam (da'wah through writing) as complementary modalities that effective practitioners must orchestrate according to context (Alawiyah, 2013; Saputra, 2011). More recently, the emergence of digital media has generated scholarly attention to da'wah bil wasail al-haditsah (da'wah through modern media), including social media platforms, podcasts, and YouTube channels (Fatoni, 2019; Nasrullah, 2015).

Critically, a growing body of scholarship argues that the effectiveness of da'wah depends substantially on its cultural attunement its capacity to speak the language, invoke the symbols, and resonate with the values of the communities it addresses. Rahman et al

(2022) demonstrate that culturally adaptive Islamic preaching significantly strengthens community participation and social acceptance across Javanese, Sundanese, and Minangkabau Muslim communities. Hasanah and Karim (2023) further argue that locally grounded religious communication reduces social polarization by presenting Islamic values not as foreign impositions but as the fullness and completion of indigenous moral traditions.

## 2. Local Wisdom: Conceptual Framework and Social Functions

Local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) is a multifaceted concept that encompasses the accumulated knowledge, values, practices, and worldviews that communities have developed in response to their specific environments over generations (Sartini, 2004; Wagiran, 2012). In the Indonesian academic tradition, local wisdom is understood to perform several key social functions: preserving ecological sustainability, regulating social relationships, transmitting moral values across generations, providing frameworks for conflict resolution, and generating community solidarity (Keraf, 2010; Mungmachon, 2012).

In the context of Indonesian Muslim communities, local wisdom takes diverse regional forms. The Javanese tradition encompasses principles such as *rukun* (harmonious social order), *gotong royong* (collective labor and mutual aid), and *slametan* (communal ritual meals that reinforce social bonds). Sundanese communities are guided by the ethic of *silih asah, silih asih, silih asuh* (mutual intellectual, affective, and caregiving reciprocity). In Minangkabau society, the tradition of *musyawarah mufakat* (deliberative consensus-building) provides a culturally authoritative mechanism for collective decision-making and conflict resolution. Bugis and Makassarese communities in South Sulawesi are guided by the concepts of *siri'* (honor and dignity) and *pacce* (shared suffering and solidarity). Each of these wisdom traditions carries distinct Islamic resonances and has been historically incorporated into *da'wah* discourse by practitioners sensitive to local contexts (Keraf, 2010; Sulaiman, 2021).

Scholars have identified several theoretical frameworks for understanding the relationship between local wisdom and religion. The accommodation model (Geertz, 1960; Woodward, 1989) emphasizes the historical process through which Indonesian Islam was adapted to local cultural forms, producing a distinctive synthesis. The dialogical model (Abdullah, 2006; Wahid, 2001) highlights ongoing creative negotiation between Islamic and local cultural values, rejecting both wholesale Islamization of culture and cultural reduction of Islamic teaching. The transformative model (Muhtarom, 2017; Rahardjo, 2010) focuses on the capacity of local wisdom-grounded *da'wah* to transform both individual behavior and social structures in ways that promote justice, solidarity, and peace.

## 3. Social Harmony: Theory and Religious Dimensions

Social harmony (*kerukunan sosial*) is conceptualized in this study as a dynamic, multi-dimensional social condition characterized by peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, collaborative problem-solving, and the absence of destructive conflict among community members across lines of difference (Muhtarom, 2017; Suryana, 2011). This understanding distinguishes social harmony from mere social order (which may be coercively maintained) or superficial cordiality (which may mask underlying tensions), emphasizing instead the quality of social relationships, the robustness of conflict resolution mechanisms, and the genuine recognition of shared humanity and communal responsibility.

Religious communication has long been theorized as a key contributor to social harmony in plural societies. Berger (1967) argued that religion provides a "sacred canopy" of shared meaning that undergirds social solidarity. Habermas (1984) identified communicative action oriented toward mutual understanding as the foundation of social integration. In the Indonesian context, the government's official framework of *kerukunan umat beragama* (religious harmony) has emphasized dialogue, tolerance, and mutual cooperation among religious groups as pillars of national cohesion (RI, 2019). Research consistently demonstrates that communities in which religious leaders actively promote

tolerance and inter-group cooperation exhibit lower levels of communal conflict and higher indices of social trust (Hidayat & Nuraini, 2022; Suryana, 2011).

4. Theoretical Framework: Cultural Mediation Model of Da'wah

Drawing on the literature reviewed above, this study proposes a Cultural Mediation Model of Da'wah (CMMD) as its theoretical framework. The CMMD posits that local wisdom-based da'wah functions as a form of cultural mediation in which Islamic communicators act as bridges between universal Islamic values and particular cultural expressions of those values, thereby enabling communities to experience Islamic teaching as continuous with, rather than disruptive of, their cultural identities and social practices. The model identifies three interrelated mediating mechanisms: (1) symbolic integration, through which da'wah appropriates and Islamically reframes local cultural symbols and practices; (2) institutional embedding, through which da'wah is delivered through locally trusted institutions such as mosques, pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), and customary councils; and (3) relational resonance, through which da'wah communicators employ local relational norms and communication styles to build trust and credibility with diverse community members. The CMMD predicts that da'wah characterized by all three mediating mechanisms will be most effective in promoting social harmony.

**C. METHOD**

1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design, Moustakas (1994) and the interpretive phenomenological traditions applied in religious and social science research (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenology is appropriate for this study because the research questions center on participants' lived experiences of da'wah and local wisdom—the meanings, structures, and essences of these experiences as they are subjectively encountered and socially constructed. Rather than testing predetermined hypotheses, the study sought to produce thick, interpretively rich descriptions of experience that illuminate phenomena from the inside.

The research was conducted over 12 months (January–December 2023) in five Indonesian provinces selected for their cultural, demographic, and socio-religious diversity: West Java (Sunda cultural tradition), Central Java (Javanese tradition), West Sumatra (Minangkabau tradition), South Sulawesi (Bugis-Makassarese tradition), and West Kalimantan (Dayak-Malay borderland culture). This multi-site design enables cross-cultural comparison while grounding findings in the specific social ecologies of each region.

2. Participant Selection and Profile

Participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling, targeting individuals with direct experience of Islamic da'wah activities and significant knowledge of local cultural traditions. A total of 42 participants were recruited across five participant categories. Table 1 presents the participant profile.

**Table 1. Participant Profile by Category, Province, and Gender**

Participant Category	Province(s)	Male	Female	Total	Age Range
Religious Leaders (Ulama/Kiai)	All five provinces	9	1	10	45–75 yrs
Mosque Administrators	West Java, Central Java	5	3	8	35–60 yrs
Community Elders & Traditional Leaders	West Sumatra, South Sulawesi	5	2	7	50–80 yrs
Youth Organization Members	All five provinces	6	5	11	18–30 yrs

Participant Category	Province(s)	Male	Female	Total	Age Range
Ordinary Community Members	West Java, West Kalimantan	4	2	6	25–55 yrs
<b>TOTAL</b>	—	<b>29</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>18–80 yrs</b>

*Source: Primary Data, 2023*

### 3. Data Collection

Data were collected through four complementary methods. In-depth semi-structured interviews constituted the primary data source, with each interview lasting between 60 and 120 minutes. Interviews were conducted in participants' preferred languages (Indonesian, Javanese, Sundanese, or Minangkabau) to maximize communicative comfort and depth. All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Participant observation was conducted at da'wah events, community meetings, mosque programs, and cultural ceremonies in each research site, generating approximately 340 pages of field notes. Documentary analysis involved the examination of da'wah materials (sermons, pamphlets, social media content), community records, and relevant local government documents. Researcher reflective journals were maintained throughout to support bracketing (epoche) and reflexive awareness.

### 4. Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Moustaka's (1994) modified Van Kaam method of phenomenological analysis, adapted for multi-site qualitative research in religious and cultural contexts. The analytical procedure comprised six stages: (1) listing and preliminary grouping of all relevant expressions from transcripts and field notes; (2) reduction and elimination of overlapping, irrelevant, or vague expressions; (3) clustering and thematizing of invariant constituents into core descriptive categories; (4) constructing individual textural descriptions (what participants experienced) for each participant; (5) constructing individual structural descriptions (how participants experienced it); and (6) synthesizing composite textural-structural descriptions that capture the essential structure of the phenomena across participants. NVivo 12 software supported systematic coding, while member-checking sessions with 18 key informants validated emerging interpretations. Table 2 summarizes the analytical process.

**Table 2. Summary of Data Analysis Process and Key Themes Identified**

Stage	Analytical Step	Procedure	Output
1	Horizontalization	Listing all relevant experiential statements from transcripts	1,247 preliminary statements
2	Reduction & Elimination	Removing redundant, vague, or tangential expressions	412 invariant constituents retained
3	Thematic Clustering	Grouping constituents into meaningful thematic categories	4 major themes, 12 sub-themes
4	Textural Description	Describing what each participant experienced in their own terms	42 individual textural profiles
5	Structural Description	Analyzing how and under what conditions experiences occurred	42 individual structural profiles
6	Composite Description	Synthesizing essence across all participants and sites	4 composite thematic narratives

*Source: Adapted from Moustakas (1994)*

5. Trustworthiness and Research Ethics

Research quality was ensured through Lincoln and Guba's Lincoln & Guba (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was strengthened through 12 months of prolonged engagement, source triangulation, and member-checking. Transferability was supported by thick description of research contexts and participant profiles. Dependability was maintained through a detailed audit trail of analytical decisions. Confirmability was established through peer debriefing with three senior scholars in Islamic communication and sociology of religion. The research received ethical clearance from the Institutional Review Board of Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta (Ref. No. UIN-SHJ/IRB/2022-116). All participants provided written informed consent; pseudonyms are used throughout.

**D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**RESULT**

The thematic analysis produced four major interconnected themes, each comprising multiple sub-themes. These themes represent the essential structure of participants' lived experiences of local wisdom-based da'wah and its relationship to social harmony. Table 3 presents an overview of themes and illustrative sub-themes.

**Table 3. Major Themes, Sub-themes, and Frequency of Participant References**

No.	Major Theme	Key Sub-themes	No. of Participants (n=42)	% Reference
1	Organic Embedding of Local Values in Da'wah	Gotong royong as da'wah vehicle; Slametan Islamization; Cultural symbol reframing	41	97.6%
2	Ulama and Mosque Institutions as Social Mediators	Authority & trust; Inter-group bridging; Conflict mediation	38	90.5%
3	Da'wah as Preventive Mechanism Against Extremism	Counter-narrative framing; Inclusivity promotion; Moderation discourse	35	83.3%
4	Intergenerational and Digital Challenges	Youth disconnection; Digital salafism; Cultural erosion	40	95.2%

*Source: Primary Data, 2023*

1. Theme 1: The Organic Embedding of Local Values in Islamic Da'wah

The most pervasive finding across all five research sites was the deeply organic and often unreflective manner in which religious communicators weave local wisdom values into the fabric of their da'wah practices. Unlike programmatic or strategic integration imposed from without, this embedding is experienced by both practitioners and audiences as natural, inevitable, and authentically Islamic. As Kiai Haji Muhamad Ridwan, a senior ulama in Cilacap, Central Java, explained:

*"When I speak of zakat, I speak of gotong royong. When I speak of shalat, I speak of being a good neighbor. These are not two different things. Islam came to perfect what was already beautiful in our culture. The people understand this. They feel it in their hearts."*

This perspective, shared in various formulations by 41 of 42 participants, reflects what this study terms symbolic integration—the creative appropriation of local cultural symbols and social practices as vehicles for Islamic teaching. In Javanese communities, the slametan meal a communal ritual gathering originally embedded in pre-Islamic Javanese cosmology has been reframed by generations of Muslim scholars as an occasion for du'a (collective

supplication), Quranic recitation, and communal solidarity. Far from regarding slametan as shirk (polytheism), locally embedded ulama treat it as a legitimate and culturally resonant medium for da'wah, emphasizing its functions of gratitude, social bonding, and remembrance of God.

In West Sumatra, *musyawarah mufakat* (deliberative consensus) is consistently employed not only as a decision-making mechanism but as a da'wah occasion a setting in which Islamic ethical principles of *shura* (consultation), *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood), and *'adl* (justice) are enacted, embodied, and reinforced. Several participants described how mosque-based *musyawarah* meetings addressing community conflicts were explicitly framed by their facilitators as acts of *ibadah* (worship) and da'wah, transforming an indigenous deliberative tradition into a spiritual and pedagogical practice.

In South Sulawesi, the Bugis-Makassarese concept of *siri'* (honor and dignity) is creatively reinterpreted by local ulama as a complement to Islamic concepts of *izzah* (dignity) and *murū'ah* (moral reputation), creating a synthesis that motivates ethical behavior through both cultural and religious frameworks simultaneously. This double anchoring in local tradition and Islamic teaching was described by participants as particularly powerful in motivating community compliance with Islamic moral norms, especially among older community members for whom cultural honor carries great weight.

## 2. Theme 2: Ulama and Mosque Institutions as Socially Trusted Mediators

Thirty-eight participants (90.5%) identified the ulama and mosque institutions as uniquely positioned mediators between Islamic teaching and local community life. This theme encompasses three interrelated sub-themes: social authority grounded in moral credibility, capacity for inter-group bridging, and effectiveness in conflict mediation.

The social authority of local ulama is experienced by community members not primarily as a function of formal religious education though this is valued but as a quality of personal moral exemplariness, social rootedness, and cultural fluency. Ustadzah Siti Khadijah, a female da'iyah (female Islamic communicator) in Bandung, West Java, articulated this clearly: "People listen to ustadz who lives among us, who eats our food, who knows our problems, who speaks our language. Not someone who comes from outside and tells us our culture is haram." This perception of the locally embedded religious communicator as a culturally fluent insider generates a form of relational trust that significantly amplifies the effectiveness of da'wah communication.

Mosque institutions were consistently described as the primary social spaces in which Islamic da'wah and local community life intersect. Beyond their formal liturgical functions, mosques in all five research sites serve as venues for community deliberation, social welfare distribution, dispute resolution, cultural celebrations, and youth education. Several participants described their local mosques as "*pusats kehidupan masyarakat*" (centers of community life) rather than merely houses of worship. This multi-functionality positions mosque institutions as natural platforms for contextual da'wah that integrates Islamic teaching with community social needs and cultural practices.

The conflict mediation function of locally embedded ulama was highlighted as particularly significant for social harmony. In multiple cases across research sites, participants described situations in which family disputes, land conflicts, business disagreements, and inter-neighborhood tensions were brought before local ulama for resolution not primarily because of formal legal authority, but because of the ulama's perceived moral credibility, cultural knowledge, and social impartiality. The integration of Islamic principles of *islah* (reconciliation), *'afw* (forgiveness), and *musawah* (equality) with culturally recognized deliberative norms provides a powerful framework for sustainable conflict resolution.

3. Theme 3: Da'wah as a Preventive Mechanism Against Extremism and Social Fragmentation

Thirty-five participants (83.3%) explicitly addressed the role of local wisdom-based da'wah in countering religious extremism and social fragmentation. This theme was particularly salient in communities that had experienced the influx of scripturalist or exclusivist religious movements through digital media, returning overseas workers, or new religious organizations. Participants consistently described culturally grounded da'wah as a preventive rather than merely reactive strategy building communities' immunity against extremist narratives by strengthening their cultural and religious identity simultaneously.

A recurring counter-narrative strategy involved the affirmation of local wisdom practices as Islamic rather than un-Islamic directly challenging exclusivist narratives that sought to discredit or prohibit indigenous cultural practices. Kiai Nurdin Wahyudin of Ponorogo, East Java (a research site near Central Java included through snowball sampling), described this approach: "When they say our slametan is bid'ah, I show them that sharing food, remembering Allah, and strengthening community bonds are all Islamic. The prophet himself celebrated communal meals. Our ancestors understood this. We are following the prophet." This strategy of Islamic validation of local practice was described by participants as highly effective in retaining community members who might otherwise be attracted by the moral clarity and cultural critique offered by exclusivist movements.

Participants also described how local wisdom values function as structural buffers against social fragmentation. The gotong royong ethic, for example, creates practical interdependencies in agricultural labor, house construction, community ceremonies that transcend religious, ethnic, and political differences. Da'wah that celebrates and reinforces these interdependencies simultaneously reinforces Islamic values of ta'awun (mutual cooperation) and ukhuwwah (brotherhood), making exclusivist community withdrawal practically costly and socially costly.

4. Theme 4: Intergenerational and Digital Challenges

Nearly all participants (40 of 42, 95.2%) identified intergenerational disconnection and digital disruption as the most significant challenges facing local wisdom-based da'wah in contemporary Indonesia. This theme reflects the structural tensions between the socially embedded, relational, and embodied character of local wisdom transmission and the individualized, disembodied, and algorithmically mediated character of digital religious consumption.

Youth participants in particular described a growing sense of distance from the cultural traditions that undergird local wisdom-based da'wah. Many expressed appreciation for local wisdom in the abstract while admitting that they rarely participated in the communal practices slametan meals, gotong royong labor, musyawarah gatherings through which local wisdom is embodied and transmitted. Urban migration, nuclear family living arrangements, and the substitution of digital sociality for face-to-face community interaction were identified as key drivers of this disconnection.

The challenge of digital religious content was described with particular concern by religious leaders. Several participants described cases of community members especially youth who had adopted more exclusivist religious orientations after prolonged exposure to social media content from overseas-based Islamic content creators who are unfamiliar with Indonesian cultural traditions. Ustadz Rahmat Hidayat of Makassar articulated a widely shared concern: "The young people watch YouTube and they learn that our local traditions are wrong. They come back to the mosque and challenge the kiai. This is new. This did not happen before the internet."

Despite these challenges, several participants described innovative responses. Some mosque institutions have developed social media channels and YouTube accounts that present local wisdom-integrated da'wah content in formats and styles appealing to younger audiences. Others have established youth-focused pesantren programs that deliberately

combine Islamic education with structured engagement in local cultural practices. These adaptive strategies suggest that local wisdom-based da'wah is not inherently incompatible with digital media but that its effective digitization requires deliberate, community-rooted effort.

## DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Local Wisdom as Structural Resource for Da'wah Effectiveness

The findings of this study provide substantial empirical support for the Cultural Mediation Model of Da'wah proposed in the theoretical framework. The organic embedding of local wisdom in da'wah practices (Theme 1) corresponds to the model's mechanism of symbolic integration, confirming that effective da'wah in culturally diverse Muslim communities operates not by displacing local cultural frameworks but by inhabiting and transforming them from within. This finding is consistent with the accommodation model articulated by Geertz (1960) and Woodward (1989) and extends it by demonstrating its contemporary vitality and social functionality.

The present findings also complicate simple dichotomies between "authentic" Islam and "syncretic" local practice that underlie exclusivist critiques of culturally adaptive da'wah. As participants across all five research sites demonstrated, locally embedded religious communicators do not experience themselves as compromising Islamic authenticity by engaging with local wisdom; rather, they experience this engagement as an expression of the Islamic principle of *rahmatan lil-'alamin* mercy for all the worlds and as following the prophetic example of adapting Islamic communication to the capacities and cultural realities of diverse audiences (Muhtarom, 2017; Wahid, 2001)

### 5.2 Social Harmony as an Emergent Property of Cultural Mediation

A central theoretical contribution of this study is the conceptualization of social harmony not as a static condition to be maintained but as an emergent property of ongoing cultural mediation processes. The findings demonstrate that social harmony in the communities studied is actively produced and reproduced through the iterative practices of local wisdom-based da'wah: the community meal that reinforces shared identity and Islamic belonging; the mosque *musyawarah* that channels conflict into structured deliberation; the *ulama's* sermon that validates cultural practices as Islamic and Islamic values as culturally continuous. Social harmony, in this perspective, is not a natural state disrupted by conflict but an achievement perpetually renewed through communicative and cultural practice (Habermas & McCarthy, 1984; Suryana, 2011).

This conceptualization has significant implications for policy and practice. If social harmony is an achievement of cultural mediation rather than a natural condition, then the erosion of the institutional and cultural mechanisms through which that mediation occurs the weakening of mosque communities, the decline of local wisdom transmission, the disruption of intergenerational cultural continuity constitutes a direct threat to social harmony. Policy responses to social fragmentation and religious extremism that focus solely on repression or counter-narrative broadcasting, without attending to the restoration of these underlying mediating mechanisms, are likely to prove insufficient.

### 5.3 Gender and Social Diversity in Da'wah Practice

While the study design did not specifically focus on gender dynamics, an important finding emerged regarding the underappreciated role of female religious communicators (*da'iyah*) in sustaining local wisdom-based da'wah. Female participants and female-identified *da'iyah* described distinctive approaches to cultural da'wah that operate primarily in domestic, educational, and women's community spaces: *majlis taklim* (Islamic study circles for women), *arisan* (rotating savings and social gatherings), and family religious education. These spaces, often invisible in male-dominated accounts of da'wah, constitute important transmission mechanisms for both Islamic values and local wisdom, particularly in contexts

where public mosque da'wah reaches primarily male audiences. Future research should systematically examine the gendered dimensions of cultural da'wah and local wisdom transmission.

#### 5.4 Implications for Islamic Communication Theory

The findings of this study contribute to Islamic communication theory in several respects. First, they empirically demonstrate the inadequacy of purely message-centered or rhetorical models of da'wah effectiveness, showing that da'wah's social impact is determined not primarily by the content of individual sermons or communications but by the cumulative cultural embedding of da'wah in community life over time. Second, they highlight the relational and institutional dimensions of da'wah effectiveness the importance of the da'i's personal credibility, cultural fluency, and social rootedness as factors that purely content-focused or channel-focused theories of communication have tended to underemphasize. Third, they draw attention to the preventive social functions of da'wah its role in building communities' resilience against extremism as an analytically distinct dimension that warrants greater theoretical and empirical attention.

#### 5.5 Comparison with Previous Studies

The present findings are broadly consistent with the conclusions of Rahman et al. (2022) regarding the effectiveness of culturally adaptive Islamic preaching in Indonesian Muslim communities, and with those of Hasanah and Karim (2023) regarding the role of locally grounded religious communication in reducing social polarization. The present study advances these findings by providing a more detailed phenomenological analysis of the mechanisms through which cultural integration operates, the institutional contexts that enable it, and the contemporary challenges that threaten it. Compared with Sulaiman's (2021) analysis of local wisdom and Islamic communication in historical perspective, the present study's multi-site contemporary ethnographic focus reveals both the vitality and the vulnerability of these traditions in the current digital era. The theme of intergenerational and digital challenges identified in this study represents a significant finding that extends beyond the scope of previous studies and calls for dedicated scholarly attention.

## E. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the role of Islamic da'wah integrated with local wisdom as a strategy for social harmony in Muslim communities across five Indonesian provinces through qualitative phenomenological research with 42 participants. Four major themes emerged from the analysis: the organic embedding of local wisdom values in da'wah practices; the pivotal mediating role of ulama and mosque institutions; the preventive function of culturally grounded da'wah against extremism and social fragmentation; and the intergenerational and digital challenges that threaten the transmission of this tradition.

Together, these findings demonstrate that local wisdom-based Islamic da'wah is not a peripheral cultural phenomenon but a structurally significant mechanism for producing and sustaining social harmony in pluralistic Muslim communities. The Cultural Mediation Model of Da'wah proposed in this study emphasizing symbolic integration, institutional embedding, and relational resonance as interrelated mediating mechanisms provides a theoretically coherent account of how this mechanism operates and why it is effective. Social harmony, the analysis shows, is not a natural state but an achievement perpetually renewed through the communicative and cultural practices of locally embedded religious communicators.

This study contributes to Islamic communication theory by providing an empirically grounded Cultural Mediation Model of Da'wah that complements and extends existing persuasion-focused and channel-focused theories. It contributes to the sociology of religion by demonstrating the ongoing vitality and social functionality of locally embedded religious practice in an era of globalizing religious movements. It contributes to multicultural education

research by highlighting the importance of local wisdom as both a substantive content resource and a relational framework for inclusive community education.

Practically, this study recommends that Islamic educational institutions integrate local cultural studies into curricula for training da'wah practitioners, preparing them to function as culturally fluent mediators rather than merely theological experts. Mosque organizations should invest in multi-functional community programming that strengthens the institutional embedding of da'wah in community life, particularly in areas experiencing rapid urbanization or digital disruption. Governmental religious affairs agencies should develop policies that support the preservation and revitalization of local wisdom traditions as components of national religious moderation strategy. Da'wah organizations should develop culturally grounded digital content strategies that leverage the reach of social media while maintaining the relational authenticity and cultural specificity that make local wisdom-based da'wah effective.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The qualitative phenomenological design prioritizes depth of understanding over statistical generalizability; the findings describe the essential structure of experiences in the communities studied and cannot be directly generalized to all Indonesian Muslim communities without further research. The gender imbalance in the participant sample (29 male, 13 female) may limit the study's account of female-centered da'wah practices. Future research should conduct systematic mixed-methods studies examining the quantitative relationship between indicators of local wisdom-based da'wah and social harmony outcomes across larger samples; investigate the gendered dimensions of da'wah and local wisdom transmission; examine comparative cases across other Muslim-majority nations with rich indigenous wisdom traditions (Malaysia, Morocco, Senegal, Bangladesh); and explore the specific digital media strategies that most effectively translate local wisdom-based da'wah for online audiences.

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