



Research Article

Da'wah as Moral Presence: Reframing Multicultural Da'wah through the Ethics of 'Ibad Al-Rahman

Sumadi

Fakultas Syariah dan Hukum, Universitas Islam Darussalam Ciamis, Indonesia

E-mail: Sumadiz009@gmail.com 



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Abstract. In Muslim-majority yet religiously plural societies, da'wah increasingly unfolds within multicultural and digitally mediated public arenas where its social and ethical consequences are closely scrutinized. Although recent scholarship on digital da'wah has generated important insights into media adaptation and audience engagement, it often conceptualizes da'wah instrumentally, prioritizing visibility and communicative efficacy over ethical formation. This article reframes da'wah as moral presence, understood as ethics-centered communication grounded in embodied character, relational restraint, and public responsibility. Employing the Qur'anic moral figure of 'Ibad al-Rahman as a conceptual lens, the study develops a normative framework that foregrounds ethical subjectivity as integral to communicative effectiveness in plural contexts. Rather than offering textual exegesis, the article synthesizes empirical findings on digitally mediated preaching, intercultural sensitivity, and

religious personality with normative discourses on harmony and moderation. It argues that da'wah attains public legitimacy not through persuasion alone, but through the moral comportment of the da'i as a public ethical actor.

Keywords: Da'wah Ethics, Islamic Communication, Moral Presence, Religious Pluralism, Multicultural Communication, Digital Da'wah, Islamic Ethics, Public Religion

INTRODUCTION

In Muslim-majority yet religiously plural societies, da'wah increasingly operates within public arenas shaped by multicultural contestation, state governance, and mediated visibility. In such contexts, religious communication is no longer evaluated solely by doctrinal soundness or intra-community persuasion, but by its wider social consequences particularly its implications for interreligious harmony, civic coexistence, and the management of difference (Irwandi et al., 2023; Salam, 2016). In Indonesia and Malaysia, religious pluralism itself has become a contested discursive terrain, institutionalized through fatwa and their circulation into public policy, legal reasoning, and social disputes (Hasyim, 2019). These dynamics position da'wah as a publicly consequential practice whose legitimacy is assessed through its capacity either to sustain social cohesion or to intensify conflict within plural public life (Irwandi et al., 2023; Salam, 2016).

At the same time, the conditions of da'wah are being profoundly reshaped by digital mediation. Empirical studies show that religious strengthening and participation in da'wah activities particularly among students now occur predominantly through gadget-based electronic media and social media platforms rather than through face to face transmission (Chamadi et al., 2023). Research on YouTube da'wah further demonstrates how preachers adapt linguistic registers, including slang, to attract attention, construct personal identities, and satisfy audience "uses and gratification", even when such adaptations risk sidelining established ethical norms of *qaulan* in Islamic communication (Syam et al., 2023). Other quantitative studies frame contemporary da'wah development through innovation-oriented paradigms, for example by examining the statistical influence of a "Quranic STEM" approach on da'wah activism in the digital era (Ranawigena & Anggrayni, 2024). Taken together, these findings indicate that multicultural contestation and digital mediatization jointly intensify scrutiny of da'wah as a social practice with ethical and civic implications, rather than as a purely devotional or instructional activity (Chamadi et al., 2023; Hasyim, 2019; Salam, 2016).

Despite their empirical value, much recent da'wah scholarship especially research focused on digital platforms conceptualizes da'wah primarily through instrumental and programmatic lenses. Studies of online preaching often operationalize da'wah in terms of audience attraction, message packaging, and media efficacy, foregrounding attention economies and communicative adaptation while identifying ethical distortions when *qaulan* norms are marginalized (Syam et al., 2023). Similarly, analyses of student religiosity in the digital era emphasize patterns of media consumption and preferences for particular affective preaching styles,

framing religiosity as mediated engagement rather than as sustained ethical formation (Chamadi et al., 2023). Even when drawing explicitly on the Qur'an, innovation-centered approaches may treat scripture chiefly as a legitimating resource for modern thematic integration, with da'wah "development" assessed through measurable influence rather than ethical encounter (Ranawigena & Anggrayni, 2024). These approaches are indispensable for mapping contemporary transformations in religious communication, yet they tend to privilege reach, appeal, and adaptation over systematic theorization of da'wah as an ethics-centered mode of being-with others in plural public life.

Parallel normative discussions strongly affirm that da'wah should cultivate tolerance, moderation, and non-provocation, and should contribute to the protection of citizens' rights and national harmony (Irwandi et al., 2023; Salam, 2016). State-oriented discourses likewise caution against preaching that provokes conflict between Islam and the state or between religious communities, linking "good da'wah" to the moral foundations of civic life (Salam, 2016). However, while these works clearly articulate the necessity of ethical constraint and social responsibility, ethics is often framed at the level of general injunctions rather than as a fine-grained moral anthropology of the *da'i* as an ethical subject. As a result, da'wah risks being publicly interpreted less as a shared moral contribution to coexistence and more as a competitive performance particularly in contexts where pluralism itself becomes a contested signifier within dominant religious discourse and policy debates (Hasyim, 2019).

This article responds to these limitations by reframing da'wah as moral presence that is, as ethical communication manifested through embodied character, relational restraint, and responsibility in plural social space rather than primarily as message transmission optimized for persuasion, visibility, or platform performance. The need for such reframing is already suggested by empirical findings that document ethical drift in digitally mediated preaching, especially when attention-seeking strategies compromise established *qaulan* ethics (Syam et al., 2023), as well as by normative accounts that explicitly link da'wah to tolerance-building and social harmony as public goods (Irwandi et al., 2023; Salam, 2016). Crucially, this ethics-centered orientation is reinforced by evidence that intercultural sensitivity among Muslim students is positively influenced by Islamic worldview and most significantly mediated by Islamic religious personality (Noorfuad & Wok, 2018). This finding underscores that ethical subjectivity is not peripheral but constitutive of communicative effectiveness in multicultural environments, where the impact of da'wah is inseparable from moral comportment and relational capacity.

Within this ethics-centered perspective, the article proposes the Qur'anic moral figure of 'Ibad al-Rahman as a conceptual lens for articulating da'wah as moral presence. Rather than advancing a verse-by-verse exegetical analysis, the study reconstructs the ethical significance of 'Ibad al-Rahman conceptually, in dialogue with contemporary empirical and normative scholarship on da'wah ethics, moderation, harmony, and intercultural sensitivity. This proposal is motivated by three converging concerns evident in the literature: the demonstrated ethical tensions in mediatized preaching practices (Syam et al., 2023), the recurring

normative demand that da'wah contribute to civic harmony rather than conflict within plural societies (Irwandi et al., 2023), and the empirical salience of religious personality for intercultural sensitivity, which indicates that ethical dispositions are communicatively consequential in diverse environments (Noorfuad & Wok, 2018). The reframing is further situated alongside integrative perspectives that position Islamic education, knowledge production, and community initiatives as resources for peace, development, and social integration, particularly where Muslim institutions seek to foster bridge-building and collaborative orientations in plural contexts (Gamon & Tagoranao, 2022), while remaining attentive to ethnographic insights that emphasize non-politicization and community-sensitive approaches in transformative da'wah practices (Pambayun et al., 2022).

Accordingly, the aim of this article is to develop a conceptual model of multicultural da'wah as moral presence, grounded in Qur'anically oriented ethical communication and operationalized through the ethical formation of the *da'i* as a public moral actor. The article contributes to Islamic communication scholarship in three ways. First, it extends communication-oriented da'wah research beyond media strategy and audience gratification where ethical norms may be compromised toward an explicit moral framework attentive to *qaulan* ethics and ethical subjectivity (Chamadi et al., 2023; Syam et al., 2023). Second, it strengthens the theoretical linkage between intercultural sensitivity and religious personality formation, foregrounding ethics as a constitutive dimension of communication in multicultural environments (Noorfuad & Wok, 2018). Third, it offers a normative response to public anxieties surrounding conflict, tolerance, and pluralism by positioning da'wah as a practice accountable to social harmony and non-provocation within contested plural public spheres (Hasyim, 2019; Irwandi et al., 2023; Salam, 2016). The article proceeds by critically engaging instrumental and platform-centric approaches to da'wah, elaborating the ethics of 'Ibad al-Rahman as a communicative framework, and synthesizing these insights into a model of da'wah as moral presence with implications for ethically sustainable religious communication in plural and mediatized societies.

LITERATUR REVIEW

The Ethical Turn in Da'wah and Normative Communication Theory

In communication theory, ethical communication is increasingly understood as constitutive rather than instrumental. Normative approaches emphasize that communication practices do not merely transmit values but actively shape moral orientations, public norms, and social responsibilities. This theoretical shift finds a strong parallel in contemporary da'wah studies, which increasingly problematize the reduction of da'wah to message delivery or persuasive efficiency. Rather than focusing solely on communicative reach, recent scholarship foregrounds ethical accountability as the central challenge of da'wah in mediated environments (Khasanah, 2019).

The rise of digital da'wah intensifies this ethical concern. Studies of social media-based preaching demonstrate how platform logics such as virality, algorithmic visibility, and audience gratification encourage communicative strategies oriented toward popularity rather than moral depth (Syam et al., 2023). From the perspective

of communication ethics, this tendency risks transforming da'wah into a form of strategic communication, where moral content becomes subordinate to engagement metrics. Such a shift undermines the normative foundations of religious communication, particularly when stylistic adaptation eclipses ethical reflection.

Da'wah scholarship responds to this challenge by calling for a reframing of da'wah as ethical presence rather than communicative performance. Khasanah (2019) emphasizes that authentic da'wah must retain its moral orientation even as it adapts to new media environments, positioning ethics as the core criterion of communicative legitimacy. This position aligns da'wah with normative communication theory, which holds that communication is ethically meaningful not because it persuades, but because it sustains moral responsibility within public interaction (Khasanah, 2019).

Multicultural Da'wah, Public Religion, and Moral Pluralism

Communication theory on public religion examines how religious discourse enters plural public spheres and negotiates moral legitimacy amid diversity. In this framework, religious communication is understood as a form of public moral discourse that shapes social boundaries and collective norms. Studies on pluralism in Southeast Asia illustrate how religious narratives, particularly when articulated through authoritative mechanisms such as fatwas, extend beyond theological debate to influence social harmony and public life (Hasyim, 2019). Da'wah thus operates not only within religious communities but also within contested public moral spaces.

Within multicultural contexts, the ethical quality of da'wah becomes decisive. Research on *da'wah kebangsaan* demonstrates how Islamic preaching can function as inclusive public religion by integrating religious commitment with civic ethics and national solidarity (Riyadi et al., 2021). Rather than asserting moral superiority, this model translates Islamic values into shared ethical vocabularies accessible across difference. Such an approach resonates with communication theory's emphasis on moral pluralism, where ethical communication seeks coexistence rather than dominance.

Community-based studies further reinforce this insight. Research on Chinese Muslim da'wah in Banyumas shows how cultural openness, socioeconomic empowerment, and avoidance of sectarian rigidity function as communicative practices that foster trust and cohesion (Musmuallim et al., 2021). From a communication-theoretical perspective, these practices represent ethical public communication, where moral credibility emerges through relational engagement. Da'wah in this sense becomes a communicative contribution to public ethics rather than a unidirectional assertion of religious norms.

Moral Communication, Character, and Ethical Credibility

A central tenet of communication ethics is that moral communication is inseparable from the moral character of communicators. Ethical credibility is not generated solely through persuasive skill or doctrinal correctness but through the perceived integrity of the communicator as a moral agent. This theoretical insight is empirically supported by studies on intercultural sensitivity among Muslim students,

which show that ethical engagement across difference is mediated by Islamic religious personality rather than communicative technique alone (Noorfud & Wok, 2018). Moral disposition thus functions as a communicative resource shaping interaction and interpretation.

Institutional studies of da'wah further substantiate this argument. Research on pesantren based digital da'wah literacy emphasizes that ethical communication is cultivated through long-term moral habituation, including values of moderation, justice, inclusivity, and wisdom (Rustandi & Kusnawan, 2023). Technical proficiency in digital platforms is treated as secondary to ethical formation, reinforcing the communication-theoretical claim that moral communication is grounded in character rather than strategy.

From a virtue-ethics perspective within communication theory, these findings suggest that da'wah operates as moral communication when the *da'i* embodies the values being communicated. Ethical presence precedes ethical persuasion. This shifts analytical focus from message effectiveness to moral embodiment, positioning da'wah as a relational practice in which ethical credibility is continuously negotiated through conduct, consistency, and social engagement.

Da'wah as Moral Presence: Qur'anic Ethics and Public Moral Agency

Synthesizing communication ethics, public religion theory, and Islamic scholarship allows da'wah to be conceptualized as moral presence. While existing literature does not explicitly theorize da'wah through the Qur'anic ethics of *'Ibad al-Rahman*, multiple studies converge on ethical orientations that closely mirror its normative attributes. Research emphasizing moderation, inclusivity, and cultural openness (Musmuallim et al., 2021; Riyadi et al., 2021; Rustandi & Kusnawan, 2023) reflects a moral posture grounded in humility, restraint, and social responsibility.

Ethical resistance to attention-driven distortion in digital da'wah further strengthens this convergence. Studies highlighting the ethical risks of performative preaching and stylistic excess underscore the need for communicative restraint and moral reflexivity (Khasanah, 2019; Syam et al., 2023). In communication theory terms, this reflects a commitment to non-coercive moral communication, where influence is exercised through example and presence rather than symbolic domination.

Practical studies on action-oriented da'wah reinforce this framework. Gus Dur's emphasis on da'wah through social practice positions moral conduct as a primary mode of religious communication (Khasanah, 2019), while research on da'wah for social justice highlights how ethical engagement materializes through empowerment and community transformation (Karimullah et al., 2023). At the same time, studies on moral discipline within da'wah communities caution against exclusionary tendencies when ethical formation is detached from intercultural sensitivity (Sipa & Lubis, 2023). These tensions affirm the relevance of *'Ibad al-Rahman* as a Qur'anic ethical anchor that balances conviction with compassion, enabling da'wah to function as public moral agency in plural societies.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study is grounded in Islamic communication scholarship, which conceptualizes *da'wah* as an ethically grounded form of religious communication oriented toward moral formation rather than instrumental persuasion. It employs a qualitative theoretical–conceptual approach, focusing on normative analysis and conceptual reconstruction instead of empirical data generation. The aim is to reframe multicultural *da'wah* from a performance and strategy-oriented model toward an ethical paradigm articulated as *moral presence*. Such an approach is appropriate for ethical inquiry and theory development, where interpretation and moral orientation are central analytical concerns (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flick, 2018), and is consistent with normative perspectives in communication ethics.

The analysis proceeds through a critical interpretive reading of selected literature on *da'wah* communication, digital religion, multicultural engagement, and moral education. These studies are treated as discursive representations of contemporary *da'wah* practices, highlighting the growing dominance of performative, strategic, and media-driven orientations in religious communication (Rustandi & Kusnawan, 2023; Syam et al., 2023). This qualitative document analysis identifies ethical tensions and conceptual gaps that arise when *da'wah* is reduced to visibility and audience optimization, situating the discussion within broader debates on ethical communication in religious and public life.

A central analytical step involves normative-conceptual mapping between communication ethics and Islamic communication scholarship. Ethical notions such as moral credibility, responsibility, moderation, and public moral agency are analytically related to findings emphasizing inclusivity, dialogical engagement, and action-oriented religious practice in *da'wah* studies (Karimullah et al., 2023; Musmuallim et al., 2021). This mapping establishes normative resonance rather than theoretical equivalence, enabling *da'wah* to be reconceptualized as a relational moral practice grounded in ethical accountability.

The Qur'anic ethical profile of *'Ibad al-Rahman* is employed as a normative moral framework, not as textual exegesis. Its relevance lies in ethical dispositions humility, restraint, non-coercion, justice, and reflexive awareness that are consistently emphasized yet remain undertheorized in *da'wah* communication research. Analytical rigor is maintained through iterative triangulation with prior empirical findings on intercultural sensitivity and moral discipline in Muslim communities (Noorfuad & Wok, 2018; Sipa & Lubis, 2023), ensuring conceptual coherence and relevance to multicultural public contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flick, 2018).

In addition, the methodological rigor of this study was strengthened through a structured process of literature exploration and conceptual validation. Scholarly sources were identified and contextualized using Scopus AI for bibliometric supported topic mapping and Scite for citation context verification, ensuring that referenced works were relevant, credible, and appropriately situated within ongoing academic discourse on multicultural *da'wah* and Islamic ethical communication.

Furthermore, GPT-5.2-based tools (including ChatGPT) were employed in a limited and supportive capacity for scholarly discussion, refinement of the article

title, conceptual exploration, and English-language editing. These tools did not generate original research content, perform data analysis, or produce interpretative claims. All theoretical framing, analytical reasoning, and conclusions were developed, critically evaluated, and finalized solely by the authors, in full compliance with ethical standards for research integrity and responsible AI use.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Humility and Non-Violent Response as Ethical Communication Practice (Q. 25:63)

The Qur'anic depiction of 'Ibad al-Rahman as those who "walk humbly upon the earth" and respond to ignorance with *salam* (Q. 25:63) emerges, in this study, as a foundational ethical posture for da'wah communication in plural and contested public spheres. Within contemporary da'wah environments particularly those mediated by digital platforms this verse can be interpreted not merely as an individual moral exhortation but as an ethical communication practice that prioritizes de-escalation, dignity, and moral restraint over symbolic domination or antagonistic engagement.

This interpretation is corroborated by empirical findings from Indonesian Islamic media discourses, where major Islamic organizations' online outlets consistently frame violence as a social pathology to be rejected rather than legitimized. Such framing indicates that moral-religious communication in public arenas can be normatively oriented toward non-violence and social responsibility, even amid heightened ideological contestation (Aly & Thoyibi, 2020). In plural public spaces that are structurally vulnerable to polarization, the ethic of non-violent response functions not merely as a strategic choice but as a public moral stance that contributes to the maintenance of social cohesion (Aly & Thoyibi, 2020; Qodir et al., 2022).

The empirical salience of this Qur'anic ethic becomes more pronounced when juxtaposed with evidence that public communication in Indonesia is frequently marked by stigma, hostility, and discourses of "hatred", particularly in high-stakes arenas such as electoral politics (Qodir et al., 2022). Despite these tensions, the West Kalimantan case demonstrates that societies characterized by deep ethnic and religious diversity are nevertheless capable of sustaining peaceful and harmonious interaction in everyday social life (Qodir et al., 2022). This finding suggests that communicative restraint and civic civility are not utopian ideals but sociologically observable practices. Consequently, Q. 25:63 can be read as articulating a public-facing moral capacity rather than a purely private virtue that underwrites coexistence within contexts shaped by identity polarization.

Within the broader multicultural-national context, the values of humility (*tawadu'*) and peaceful response (*salam*) also resonate with Indonesian religious leaders' articulation of "religious nationalism". This framework emphasizes the public articulation of universal religious values alongside democratic guarantees of freedom of religious expression "without discrimination for adherents of all religions" (Sutomo & Budihardjo, 2021). Such an orientation aligns the ethic of Q. 25:63 with a model of da'wah that operates as a dialogical moral presence within a shared civic order, rather

than as a confrontational assertion of moral superiority (Sutomo & Budihardjo, 2021). Notably, this position rejects both a secularist exclusion of religion from the public sphere and a caliphate-oriented political project, indicating that ethical public religion in Indonesia is negotiated through a third pathway grounded in harmony and universal values an important nuance for multicultural da'wah seeking legitimacy within ideologically contested terrain (Sutomo & Budihardjo, 2021).

Night Worship and Moral Depth Beyond Performative Visibility (Q. 25:64–66)

The Qur'anic emphasis on night worship, supplication, and accountability (Q. 25:64–66) foregrounds inward moral formation as the indispensable foundation of outward ethical presence. Within the context of contemporary da'wah, this inward orientation gains particular analytical significance given the growing influence of “new media” strategies and market-driven logics that prioritize reach, visibility, and affective engagement especially among younger audiences (Saputra, 2022). The Teras da'wah case illustrates a form of mediated religiosity in which religious programming is structured through marketing considerations and designed to align with “the tastes of young people”, thereby introducing structural incentives toward performative visibility and audience gratification (Saputra, 2022).

Against this communicative landscape, Q. 25:64–66 functions as a Qur'anic counterweight by re-centering moral authority in practices whose ethical value does not depend on public display. Night worship and private supplication emphasize accountability before God rather than validation through audience metrics, offering a critical lens for assessing the moral depth of public religious communication. However, the relevant empirical literature does not uniformly portray mediated dakwah as ethically problematic. On the contrary, studies highlight how media infrastructures facilitate cross-segment outreach and the “delocalization of religious messages” across regional, cultural, and identity boundaries (Saputra, 2022).

Similarly, the repackaging of *ulama* for urban Muslim youth supported by networked youth communities on social media demonstrates that religious authority can be reproduced, negotiated, and amplified through collaborative digital cultures (Yazid et al., 2023). These findings suggest that the ethical challenge lies not in media use per se but in the risk that performative visibility substitutes for moral depth. In this regard, Q. 25:64–66 provides an analytically productive criterion for evaluating da'wah credibility: the extent to which public religious communication remains continuous with non-public disciplines that are less susceptible to the dynamics of attention economies (Saputra, 2022; Yazid et al., 2023).

Taken together, these results reframe da'wah effectiveness away from mere platform mastery and toward integrity across moral contexts private devotion, ethical accountability, and public speech. This reframing is consistent with findings that religious discourse within online institutional media can be oriented toward moral pedagogy, such as the rejection of violence as a social ill, rather than toward sensationalism. Accordingly, mediated spaces are not inherently corrosive to ethical da'wah; rather, they can sustain morally substantive communication when grounded in inward moral formation and ethical intent rather than popularity-driven incentives (Aly & Thoyibi, 2020; Saputra, 2022).

Moderation, Self-Restraint, and Social Responsibility in Public Life (Q. 25:67–68, 72)

The Qur'anic cluster addressing moderation in spending, avoidance of grave moral harms, and refusal to engage in falsehood or idle discourse (Q. 25:67–68, 72) articulates self-restraint as a public ethic with direct communicative implications. Rather than functioning solely as personal moral guidance, these verses establish ethical constraints on public expression by limiting manipulation, excess, and opportunistic speech. Within contemporary Indonesian public life, the relevance of this ethic becomes evident in political communication contexts where religious symbols and attributes are strategically mobilized to influence voting behavior and shape voter perception (Almanduri & Bakti, 2022).

Empirical findings on voter typologies distinguishing between “reactive” voters and those who are “rational, responsive, and active” demonstrate how communicative environments can incentivize emotionally driven reception and polarizing narratives. In such contexts, the Qur'anic emphasis on restraint, proportionality, and truthfulness acquires heightened ethical significance for da'wah actors who engage politically charged publics. The avoidance of inflammatory discourse and moral excess thus emerges not as communicative passivity, but as an ethically grounded intervention capable of mitigating discursive volatility (Almanduri & Bakti, 2022; Qodir et al., 2022).

Moderation and social responsibility are also observable in Islamic organizational activism that translates normative commitments into structured institutional engagement. Muhammadiyah's ecological movement provides a salient example of how moral responsibility can be operationalized through theological innovation such as the development of a “fiqh of water and political advocacy, including constitutional litigation framed as *jihad konstitusi*. While this case extends beyond communication ethics in a narrow sense, it nevertheless illustrates a form of disciplined public engagement in which religious reasoning is channeled into organized advocacy rather than rhetorical excess or populist moralization (Efendi et al., 2021).

Importantly, the study also identifies a substantive nuance: Muhammadiyah's environmental activism prioritizes economic justice over ecological security and conservation. This indicates that what constitutes “moderate” or “responsible” public religion is contingent upon the moral goods being foregrounded within a given institutional context. Such variation cautions against reading Q. 25:67–68, 72 as prescribing a single policy orientation. Instead, these verses provide ethical parameters self-restraint, avoidance of harm, and commitment to truthfulness within which diverse public priorities may be pursued (Efendi et al., 2021).

Finally, the Qur'anic injunction to avoid falsehood and meaningless discourse resonates with empirical analyses of identity contestation in Indonesia, where stigma and hatred are frequently deployed as communicative strategies. At the same time, evidence from West Kalimantan demonstrates that even under such pressures, intergroup interaction can remain peaceful and cooperative, underscoring that communicative restraint is sociologically feasible and can function as a stabilizing moral resource in plural societies (Qodir et al., 2022). Taken together, these findings

support interpreting the ethical profile of 'Ibad al-Rahman as positioning da'wah to reduce discursive volatility and sustain social trust amid contested public narratives (Qodir et al., 2022; Sutomo & Budihardjo, 2021).

Responsiveness to Revelation and Ethical Reflexivity (Q. 25:73)

The Qur'anic portrayal of 'Ibad al-Rahman as those who receive revelation without being "deaf" or "blind" (Q. 25:73) foregrounds ethical reflexivity as a core moral disposition. This reflexivity denotes an attentive, interpretive, and self-corrective engagement with guidance, in contrast to mechanical transmission or uncritical repetition. Such an orientation aligns closely with empirical findings indicating that intercultural sensitivity among Muslim students is positively influenced by Islamic worldview and Islamic religious personality, with religious personality mediating the relationship between worldview and intercultural sensitivity (Noorfuad & Wok, 2018).

This mediating role suggests that ethical receptivity is not exhausted by cognitive assent to doctrinal propositions but is embodied in personality dispositions that shape how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to difference. In this respect, the Qur'anic image of not being "blind" or "deaf" to revelation can be understood as an ethical capacity for perceptive moral reception an ability to integrate guidance into context-sensitive judgment and social interaction (Noorfuad & Wok, 2018). Ethical reflexivity thus operates as an internalized competence that informs communicative behavior in diverse social settings.

Further illumination of this reflexive ethic emerges from intra-Muslim contestations over moral interpretation, such as debates surrounding music within hijrah movements. The documented divergence where some groups condemn music as leading to *jahiliyah*, *shirk*, and *bid'ah*, while KOMUJI frames "musicking" as a legitimate pathway within hijrah demonstrates that contemporary Muslim publics actively negotiate moral claims rather than merely reproducing inherited norms. These contestations reveal interpretive plurality and underscore the relevance of Q. 25:73 as an ethical demand for discerning engagement with guidance: neither uncritical rejection nor unreflective adoption, but attentive moral reasoning responsive to context, evidence, and human consequences (Noorfuad & Wok, 2018; Qomaruzzaman & Busro, 2021).

For multicultural da'wah, this finding is particularly significant. Ethical reflexivity supports adaptive moral judgment in diverse communicative environments, enabling da'wah actors to navigate difference without resorting to rigid norm enforcement. The empirical evidence on intercultural sensitivity further suggests that religious dispositions can enhance cross-cultural engagement, indicating that Qur'anic receptivity (Q. 25:73) can be operationalized as communicative openness, moral learning, and context-sensitive expression in plural public spaces. Importantly, this reflexive orientation does not dilute normativity; rather, it reframes normativity as accountable interpretation capable of sustaining ethical integrity and social coexistence within multicultural societies (Noorfuad & Wok, 2018; Sutomo & Budihardjo, 2021).

Family, Generational Ethics, and Sustainable Moral Leadership (Q. 25:74-77)

The concluding Qur'anic attribute of 'Ibad al-Rahman supplication for righteous spouses and offspring and the aspiration to become exemplars for the righteous (Q. 25:74-77) extends the ethical horizon of da'wah beyond immediate public engagement toward generational continuity and sustainable moral leadership. This orientation is empirically supported by findings showing that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) values are deeply integrated into the daily lives of rural Indonesian families across generations. These values encompass *tawhid*, noble character, ritual worship, social ethics, and the pursuit of knowledge, indicating that moral formation is embedded within routine familial practices rather than confined to formal religious instruction (Hr et al., 2025).

The gendered dimensions identified in the study where women predominantly assume responsibility for religious education within the household, while men more frequently lead communal religious practices further demonstrate that intergenerational moral reproduction is socially organized, relational, and structured by everyday roles. Such patterned transmission aligns closely with the Qur'anic emphasis on family as a central locus of moral continuity (Q. 25:74-77). It also suggests that da'wah as "moral presence" relies on durable processes of socialization and exemplification within intimate settings, rather than on public preaching or episodic moral exhortation alone (Hr et al., 2025).

Importantly, this family-based moral ecology is shown to be adaptive under contemporary pressures, including the pervasive influence of social media and shifting lifestyle patterns. Rural families reportedly respond to these challenges through regular family discussions concerning digital media use and through active supervision of children's online activities (Hr et al., 2025). These findings are directly relevant to multicultural da'wah in digitally mediated societies, as they demonstrate that ethical formation can be sustained through everyday governance of attention, consumption, and discourse within families functions that complement, rather than compete with, public-facing da'wah strategies. In this sense, Q. 25:74-77 supports conceptualizing da'wah as a long-term moral infrastructure embedded in households and communities, rather than as episodic persuasion limited to the public sphere (Hr et al., 2025).

Finally, sustainable moral leadership must be situated within a plural civic order. Religious figures' articulation of universal values in public life, together with commitments to nondiscriminatory freedom of religious expression, provides an enabling normative framework within which family-centered moral formation can coexist with multicultural citizenship. Similarly, empirical evidence that diverse groups are able to maintain harmonious interaction even amid identity contestation suggests that intergenerational ethics, when oriented toward restraint, dignity, and peaceful coexistence, can contribute to broader social stability (Qodir et al., 2022; Sutomo & Budihardjo, 2021).

Taken together, these findings reinforce the article's central claim that the Qur'anic ethics of 'Ibad al-Rahman reframe da'wah as *moral presence*. Within this framework, credibility does not primarily arise from rhetorical force or institutional authority, but from the cumulative enactment of humility, inward discipline,

communicative restraint, ethical reflexivity, and generational continuity across private, communal, and national contexts (Hr et al., 2025; Noorfuad & Wok, 2018; Qodir et al., 2022; Saputra, 2022; Sutomo & Budihardjo, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This article has advanced the argument that multicultural da'wah in contemporary Muslim societies must be re-theorized beyond instrumental, persuasive, and platform-oriented models. Drawing exclusively on recent scholarship in Islamic communication, digital religion, and public ethics, the study demonstrates that da'wah today is increasingly embedded in morally contested public spheres shaped by political polarization, mediatized religiosity, and identity competition (Almanduri & Bakti, 2022; Qodir et al., 2022). Within such environments, the legitimacy of da'wah is evaluated not only through doctrinal correctness or communicative reach, but through its ethical consequences for social harmony, civic trust, and interreligious coexistence (Irwandi et al., 2023; Salam, 2016).

By conceptualizing da'wah as *moral presence*, this article contributes an ethics-centered framework that foregrounds embodied character, communicative restraint, and moral accountability as core dimensions of religious communication. The Qur'anic ethical profile of *'Ibad al-Rahman* (Q. al-Furqan 25:63–77) functions here not as a textual exegesis, but as a normative grammar for ethical communication in plural public life. Humility, non-provocation, moderation, reflexivity, and responsibility toward others emerge as communicative virtues that directly respond to challenges identified in studies of digital da'wah, online violence, and attention-driven religious performance (Leiliyanti et al., 2022; Syam et al., 2023).

Theoretically, this study contributes to communication ethics by introducing *moral presence* as an analytical category for religious communication. Unlike models that prioritize persuasion, visibility, or political mobilization, moral presence emphasizes how ethical subjectivity formed through discipline, humility, and consistency between inner disposition and public conduct becomes the primary source of communicative authority. This contribution is particularly relevant in contexts where religious communication intersects with electoral politics and ideological contestation, often intensifying polarization rather than fostering deliberation.

Second, the article advances theorization of public religion by demonstrating how Qur'anic ethics can inform non-coercive, publicly accountable religious communication. In societies where pluralism is contested through fatwa, political discourse, and state-religion negotiations (Hasyim, 2019; Sutomo & Budihardjo, 2021), the ethical orientation of *'Ibad al-Rahman* offers a model of da'wah that resists both religious nationalism and market-driven commodification. This positions da'wah as a moral contributor to the public sphere rather than a tool of ideological domination or consumer religiosity (Qomaruzzaman & Busro, 2021; Saputra, 2022).

Third, the study strengthens Islamic communication scholarship by integrating ethical anthropology with multicultural communication theory. Empirical findings on intercultural sensitivity demonstrate that religious personality mediates the relationship between worldview and communicative competence (Noorfuad & Wok,

2018). By situating this insight within the ethical framework of *'Ibad al-Rahman*, the article shows that da'wah effectiveness in diverse contexts depends less on rhetorical sophistication than on ethical formation and exemplarity (*uswah*). This is consistent with research on transformative and community-based da'wah, where ethical credibility is produced through lived practice rather than symbolic assertion (Pambayun et al., 2022).

Finally, this framework has broader implications for understanding religious authority and moral leadership in contemporary Islam. As traditional authority is challenged by digital fragmentation and hybrid forms of religiosity (Yazid et al., 2023), da'wah as moral presence offers a pathway to re-legitimate religious communication through ethical consistency, social responsibility, and intergenerational transmission of values (Efendi et al., 2021; Hr et al., 2025).

In sum, this article proposes *Da'wah as Moral Presence* as a theoretically grounded and context-sensitive contribution to communication theory, Islamic studies, and public ethics. By centering the Qur'anic ethics of *'Ibad al-Rahman*, it reframes da'wah as an ethically embodied practice capable of sustaining social harmony, resisting polarization, and navigating the moral complexities of plural and mediatized public life.

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