



Multicultural Islamic Preaching within a Plural Society: Ustaz Mursyidin's Contribution in Penyengat Village, Siak

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Abstract. This article examines the multicultural da'wah practices carried out by ustaz Mursyidin in Penyengat Village, Sungai Apit Subdistrict, Siak Regency, Riau—a traditional community of the Anak Rawa Tribe where most residents adhere to Christianity, Buddhism, and indigenous beliefs, while Muslims form a small minority. The study aims to explore the da'wah strategies used, identify the challenges faced, and analyze community responses within a multicultural setting. Using a qualitative character study approach, data were collected through interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Findings reveal that ustaz Mursyidin adopts a contextual and empathetic approach by engaging in da'wah bil hal, interfaith dialogue, and cultural negotiation. These strategies emphasize tolerance, participation, and exemplary conduct. The challenges include conflicts between Islamic values and local customs, as well as symbolic resistance. Nonetheless, the soft and inclusive methods employed led to a high level of acceptance among the community. This study affirms the relevance of multicultural da'wah theories, cultural da'wah, cross-cultural communication, and power relations as foundations for effective da'wah in pluralistic societies.

Keywords: multicultural da'wah; Penyengat village; religious minority; cross-cultural communication;

Abstrak. Artikel ini mengkaji praktik dakwah multikultural yang dijalankan oleh Ustaz Mursyidin di Kampung Penyengat, Kecamatan Sungai Apit, Kabupaten Siak, Riau—sebuah komunitas adat Suku Anak Rawa di mana mayoritas penduduknya menganut agama Kristen, Buddha, dan kepercayaan lokal, sementara umat Islam merupakan kelompok minoritas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguraikan strategi dakwah yang digunakan, mengidentifikasi tantangan yang dihadapi, serta menganalisis respons masyarakat dalam konteks multikultural. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi tokoh dan observasi partisipatif, disertai analisis dokumen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ustaz Mursyidin

menerapkan pendekatan yang kontekstual dan empatik melalui dakwah bil hal, dialog lintas agama, dan negosiasi budaya. Strategi ini menekankan toleransi, partisipasi, dan keteladanan sosial. Tantangan yang dihadapi antara lain benturan nilai antara ajaran Islam dan adat lokal serta resistensi simbolik. Meskipun demikian, pendekatan yang lembut dan inklusif menghasilkan tingkat penerimaan yang tinggi dari masyarakat. Penelitian ini menegaskan relevansi teori dakwah multikultural, dakwah kultural, komunikasi lintas budaya, dan relasi kekuasaan sebagai fondasi dakwah yang efektif dalam masyarakat majemuk.

Kata kunci: *Dakwah multikultural, kampung Penyengat, minoritas Islam, komunikasi lintas budaya.*

INTRODUCTION

In a small village called Penyengat, located in Sungai Apit Subdistrict, Siak Regency, religious harmony is clearly visible (Ansor & Masyhur, 2023). This village represents a miniature reflection of Indonesia's rich pluralism—ethnically, religiously, linguistically, and culturally (Hanafi & Hassan, 2022). In one household, Muslims, Christians, and Buddhists live together; they celebrate Eid al-Fitr, Christmas, and Vesak around the same dining table. Yet behind this harmony lies a complex and nuanced dynamic of Islamic da'wah (Madjid et al., 2020; Nurdianti & Yusuf, 2014; Sidiq & Harto, 2015).

According to the Penyengat Village monograph, 41.53% of the population identifies as Christian, 33.71% as Buddhist, 8.79% as Muslim, and the remaining 7.66% adhere to animism (Ansor et al., 2024). However, if one examines the religious records in the Population Registry Book stored at the Penyengat Village Office, it becomes evident that a significant number of residents officially list themselves as Buddhists (P. Santoso & Febrina, 2018).

Ustadz Mursyidin, a preacher originally from East Java, is present in the midst of the Anak Rawa Tribe community—a traditional society in which most of the population adheres to non-Islamic faiths. He does not preach through pulpits or loudspeakers but through “afternoon coffee” with neighbors, participating in community clean-up activities, and listening attentively to the concerns of residents across religious lines (Sakareeya Bungo, 2014). This is a form of da'wah that is non-confrontational, dialogic, cultural, and deeply empathetic (Madjid et al., 2021).

In such a community, conventional Islamic da'wah approaches are no longer relevant. Normative appeals alone are insufficient to address the complexities of differing beliefs, customary values, and social practices. Islam is instead tested for its relevance within spaces of encounter—not through

discourse dominance (Nahara & Nurcholis, 2021). In this context, da'wah must be understood not merely as the transmission of religious doctrines, but as an effort to build bridges of understanding among diverse communities. This model firmly rejects confrontational methods and replaces them with a transformative, humanistic approach (Kristianto & Dedy Pradesa, 2020).

Previous studies have highlighted Islamic da'wah efforts in traditional and marginalized communities. Bungsu (2021), for instance, investigated Tengku Nasruddin's preaching among the Gayo Tribe and found that a cultural da'wah approach—which emphasizes respect for local values—was more effective in homogenous societies. Meanwhile, Budiman (2019) examined the role of the Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Council (DDII) within the Akit Sonde Tribe community; however, his research focused more on DDII's national institutional structure rather than the local community's social dynamics. Jamalie (2015) proposed a da'wah model for isolated tribal communities in South Kalimantan, though his study remained largely conceptual with limited field data. Research by Noor et al. (2023) in the Anak Dalam Tribe community in Jambi stressed the importance of using local wisdom-based approaches so that preachers could be accepted as part of the community, rather than being seen as outsiders. Meanwhile, Mubasyaroh (2019) emphasized the necessity of ethical communication in contemporary Islamic da'wah, particularly in delivering teachings empathetically and contextually.

While these studies offer valuable contributions, most of them do not directly address the realities of da'wah within minority Muslim communities that are religiously and culturally plural. In this context, Penyengat Village in Siak Regency presents a unique case: an indigenous Anak Rawa Tribe community, the majority of whom are non-Muslim, yet who maintain open and harmonious social relations.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to examine the multicultural da'wah practices carried out by Ustaz Mursyidin as an effort to build acceptance of Islam within an interfaith community, as well as to strengthen social cohesion amid diverse traditions and beliefs. This article focuses on three main research questions: First, what da'wah strategies does Ustaz Mursyidin use in engaging with the multicultural society of Penyengat Village? Second, what challenges arise from differences in values, customs,

and religious beliefs? Third, how do members of different faiths respond to the da'wah approach implemented?

By framing the discussion around these questions, this article aims to contribute to the development of both the theory and practice of Islamic da'wah in pluralistic societies, particularly within minority Muslim communities.

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach using a character study and ethnographic fieldwork method (Herdiansyah, 2018). This approach was chosen to explore in depth the strategies, dynamics, and meanings behind the da'wah activities conducted by Ustaz Mursyidin within the multicultural society of Penyengat Village. The primary focus is not on quantitative measurement but on *verstehen*—a deep understanding of how religious communication is constructed in a community that is religiously and culturally plural (Susilo, 2017).

Data were collected through three main techniques: **1).** Semi-structured interviews, primarily with Ustaz Mursyidin, traditional leaders, religious figures from other faiths, and interfaith community members; **2).** Participatory observation, conducted during *da'wah bil hal* activities, interfaith dialogues, and religious celebrations; and **3).** Documentation, including village archives, population records, and documentation of social-religious events.

The validity of the data was ensured through source and method triangulation, as well as *member checks* to confirm the accuracy of the information. Data analysis was carried out inductively, through data reduction, thematic categorization, and the formulation of conclusions within the framework of multicultural da'wah theory, cultural da'wah, cross-cultural communication, and power relations.

In this study, Penyengat Village is positioned not merely as a physical location, but as a multicultural social space—an important arena for examining contemporary Islamic da'wah practices that are inclusive and transformative.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals the dynamics of Islamic da'wah as carried out by Ustaz Mursyidin within the multicultural context of Penyengat Village, Siak Regency. Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, several key aspects were identified that reflect the strategies employed in his da'wah, the challenges he encountered, and the socio-religious conditions of the local community. The following sections present field findings categorized into several major themes.

Da'wah Strategies Employed by Ustaz Mursyidin

Ustaz Mursyidin, a preacher born in East Java in 1980, stands out as a unique figure within the traditional community of the Anak Rawa Tribe—a local society in which the majority of residents adhere to Christianity, Buddhism, and ancestral belief systems. He was born and raised in Magetan Regency, a region on the slopes of Mount Lawu known for its strong pesantren (Islamic boarding school) traditions and santri culture. His elementary through high school education took place in a strict, religiously homogeneous pesantren environment, which shaped a strong, textually formal foundation in Islamic knowledge.

However, in 2007/2008, he made a pivotal decision: to leave his home region and settle permanently in Penyengat Village, Sungai Apit Subdistrict, Siak Regency, Riau—a geographically remote area with religious and cultural conditions vastly different from his background. This encounter marked a turning point in his da'wah journey. He did not merely bring Islamic teachings from the pesantren; he also had to adapt them to the realities of a pluralistic community with value systems and traditions far removed from his prior social experience.

For a preacher shaped by a pesantren culture, entering a multicultural setting like Penyengat was not an easy task. He faced challenges not only doctrinally, but also in terms of value clashes, symbolic language, and cultural resistance. Instead of maintaining a rigid, normative approach to da'wah, Ustaz Mursyidin chose a transformative path: integrating himself into the community, building relationships, and first seeking to understand the local culture before delivering religious messages. This choice reflects both his

adaptive capacity and epistemological courage in reconfiguring the da'wah method he had previously learned in pesantren.

Through this process, Ustad Mursyidin became not only a preacher but also a cultural learner and social facilitator capable of bridging Islamic values with local traditions. His presence represents the model of a contextual preacher—one who not only masters religious texts but also understands the context, presenting Islam not as a dominant identity imposing itself, but as a liberating way of life.

One of the main strategies employed by Ustad Mursyidin is fostering open dialogue with interfaith communities and traditional leaders. This strategy stems from his awareness that the community he is addressing is not a homogenous Muslim population, but a multicultural society that upholds the values of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), kinship, and religious freedom. Rather than relying on formal preaching methods such as sermons at the mosque, Ustad Mursyidin mostly utilizes social spaces as mediums for religious communication. Community forums such as village meetings, collective clean-up efforts, and major religious celebrations serve as crucial platforms for him to subtly and dialogically convey Islamic values.

In an interview, Ustad Mursyidin shared that he prefers to sit and chat casually under a tree or drink coffee with local residents rather than deliver sermons right away. “I don’t want to just show up and start preaching. I have to become part of them first—join their work, chat, and eat together. Only then can I slowly begin to talk about religion,” (Interview with Ustad Mursyidin, September 10, 2024). This awareness of the importance of building social relationships before conveying da'wah messages reflects a high level of contextual sensitivity (Ihsani, 2020).

He also emphasized that the trust of the community is the key to successful da'wah. In his words, “If they already trust me, they’ll listen to whatever I say. But if I come acting like an ustaz who knows everything, they’ll shut their ears.” (Interview with Ustad Mursyidin, September 10, 2024). This shows that da'wah in multicultural communities requires not only Islamic knowledge but also social intelligence and the ability to build horizontal relationships (Masturi, 2019).

These spaces of dialogue often become venues for discussing sensitive issues such as interfaith marriage, dietary restrictions, or traditional

celebrations considered to be at odds with Islamic teachings. Instead of reacting rigidly, Ustaz Mursyidin chooses to listen first, then gently share Islamic perspectives in a non-patronizing manner (Tajiri, 2010). This respectful attitude makes traditional leaders and religious figures from other faiths feel valued, ultimately opening the door for interfaith cooperation (Hafiz, 2021).

The dialogic practices initiated by Ustaz Mursyidin reflect principles of cross-cultural communication theory, in which a religious communicator is expected to understand not only the content of the message but also cultural codes, social context, and community sensitivities (Anas, 2006). This strategy reinforces the values of multicultural da'wah—preaching Islam not through a logic of dominance but through recognition and respect for difference (Marfu'ah, 2018).

The second main strategy used by Ustaz Mursyidin is *da'wah bil hal*, or preaching through action. Rather than relying on verbal and rhetorical preaching, he chooses to present Islam through concrete actions and social examples. For him, true religiosity is grounded in daily life and experienced as tangible benefits by the community, regardless of religious affiliation. “If Islam is only about lectures, people get bored. But if Islam shows up when they need it, that's when real da'wah happens,” (Interview with Ustaz Mursyidin, September 10, 2024).

This exemplary conduct is evident in his active involvement in village life. When someone is ill—Muslim or non-Muslim—he visits and offers prayers. During traditional or religious events held by Christians or Buddhists, he is invited as a guest of honor. In fact, he assists with preparations and logistics during Christmas and Vesak celebrations. In return, when Muslims organize events such as the Prophet's Birthday (*Maulid Nabi*) or Qur'an Recitation Competitions (*MTQ*), non-Muslim residents also join in, illustrating a mutual spirit of social solidarity nurtured through inclusive da'wah practices.

This type of *da'wah bil hal* exemplifies the prophetic model of Islamic preaching, which emphasizes ethics and personal example as primary methods of spreading the faith. Theoretically, this strategy strengthens the framework of cultural da'wah, in which religious symbols are not always conveyed explicitly, but are brought to life through social practices that are

emotionally resonant and leave lasting impressions (Rafdeadi, 2014; Syamsuri, 2017).

The third strategy employed by Ustaz Mursyidin is cultural negotiation and traditional advocacy, particularly when facing conflicts between Islamic teachings and deeply rooted local customs among the Anak Rawa community. In various cultural practices—such as traditional weddings, the slaughtering of pigs, serving of palm wine (*tuak*), and the use of dogs (*keoyok*) as ritual symbols—he avoids outright rejection or open confrontation. Instead, he adopts a dialogic and persuasive approach, gradually educating the community about Islamic perspectives on these cultural symbols (Fikri & Wiradaningrat, 2020).

One striking example occurred during a marriage conflict involving a Muslim convert (*mualaf*) and their partner from a non-Muslim family. In local custom, a marriage is considered valid if it involves a ceremonial procession with a *keoyok*—a male dog symbolizing masculinity and ancestral blessing. However, in Islam, dogs are considered ritually impure (*najis*) and cannot be part of a sacred ritual. In this case, Ustaz Mursyidin did not outright reject the ritual. Instead, he invited traditional leaders and the families of both parties to engage in a discussion. He sought a middle ground—one that honored tradition while remaining faithful to Islamic principles. The solution agreed upon was to use a symbolic substitute that did not violate Islamic beliefs, yet still preserved the dignity of the local culture.

In the interview, Ustaz Mursyidin stated:

“I don’t want to cut off their traditions. But I also can’t sacrifice Islamic principles. So I try to find a bridge—so that Islam can live on, and tradition remains honored.”
(Interview with Ustaz Mursyidin, September 10, 2024)

This attitude reflects the understanding that da’wah is not merely about delivering doctrine but about navigating the sensitive spaces between normative religious values and the cultural values of the community. Through a negotiated approach (Jailani, 2014), Ustaz Mursyidin acts not as a judge but as a mediator; not as a guardian of orthodoxy, but as a cultural facilitator.

This strategy aligns with theories of power relations, which emphasize that social transformation does not have to occur through domination but can emerge through recognition and symbolic negotiation (Allan, 2022;

Bourdieu, 2018; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Ustaz Mursyidin leverages his social influence—not through structural authority, but through moral and cultural legitimacy—to create new spaces where Islamic law (*syariat*) can be adapted without undermining local values (Adde, 2022).

Challenges of Da'wah: Between Tradition and Shari'a

One of the most complex challenges faced by Ustaz Mursyidin in his da'wah efforts in Penyengat Village is the presence of cultural traditions and symbolic practices that explicitly conflict with fundamental principles of Islamic shari'a. In the customs of the Anak Rawa Tribe, the dog (*koyok*) is not merely a domestic animal but holds symbolic meaning in wedding rituals. The *koyok* is considered a representation of strength and courage and is paraded in a procession to the bride's house as a sign of ancestral blessing. In contrast, Islam regards dogs as ritually impure (*najis*) and forbids their inclusion in sacred rituals.

Furthermore, foods such as pork and drinks like palm wine (*tuak*) are integral to local customs, especially during major events such as harvest festivals, thanksgiving ceremonies, or when welcoming honored guests. The consumption of these items is not merely dietary but is imbued with social and spiritual meaning—serving as symbols of communal bonding and ancestral reverence. These customs pose serious challenges for Islamic da'wah, which strictly prohibits both. However, instead of outright rejection, Ustaz Mursyidin chooses a gradual and understanding approach. He does not immediately declare such practices forbidden (*haram*) or demand change; rather, he carefully constructs Islamic narratives over time—often using stories, personal experiences, and external examples.

In an interview, he explained:

“I can't just say ‘that's haram’—they'll think I'm insulting their tradition. I simply say that Islam offers a different way of life. I don't try to erase their practices outright—I offer alternatives.” (Interview with Ustaz Mursyidin, September 10, 2024)

This approach reflects a cultural and communicative da'wah strategy that understands how cultural value shifts require time and awareness—not coercion (Indah, 2019). By avoiding open confrontation, Ustaz Mursyidin maintains dialogue and creates a space of encounter between Islamic shari'a and local customs. He gradually encourages new Muslim converts to give up

pork and *tuak*, but does not pressure non-Muslims to abandon their traditions (Nirwan Wahyudi Ar & Asmawarni, 2020).

In practice, this demonstrates the real application of cross-cultural communication theory, which emphasizes the importance of understanding cultural symbols and meanings before conveying a message of change (Liliweri, 2005). It also reflects a strategy of cultural conflict management, recognizing that religious change imposed too quickly can provoke resistance or even horizontal conflict within indigenous communities.

In a context where Islam is a minority, gentle and gradual approaches like this tend to have a stronger long-term impact. Instead of generating tension, Ustaz Mursyidin presents an image of Islam that is adaptive, respectful, and full of wisdom—mirroring the Prophet Muhammad's own method when engaging with the culturally and religiously complex society of pre-Islamic Arabia.

Another frequent challenge in Ustaz Mursyidin's da'wah is related to interfaith marriages and the conversion (*mualaf*) process that often accompanies them. Many residents of Penyengat Village embrace Islam due to marriage, particularly women from non-Muslim backgrounds who marry Muslim men from outside the village or from mixed-faith families. However, converting to Islam is not merely a matter of changing one's religious status on paper—it carries deep social and spiritual consequences, especially when Islamic values adopted by new converts clash with local customs and the expectations of their original communities.

Another challenge faced by Ustaz Mursyidin in his da'wah work in Penyengat Village concerns the perception held by some non-Muslim residents toward Islam itself. Many of them view Islam as a strict, complex religion full of restrictions. This perception mainly arises from daily ritual obligations, prohibitions on certain foods such as pork and *tuak* (palm wine), and the shari'a-based rulings that are seen as difficult to apply in everyday village life.

In interviews, several non-Muslim residents openly expressed that they were "afraid" to convert to Islam due to the obligations of praying five times a day, waking up early for dawn prayer (*Subuh*), covering the body (*aurat*), and giving up foods they have been accustomed to since childhood. One resident even stated:

“We are village people—we’re used to living freely. If we convert to Islam, there are too many rules. If we make a mistake, it’s considered sinful. We’re afraid we won’t be able to follow it all.” (Interview with Mr. Henri, September 19, 2024)

This narrative reveals a symbolic gap between the local community’s understanding of Islam and their own cultural realities. It presents a unique challenge for Ustaz Mursyidin to communicate Islam in a welcoming, contextual, and practical way. He realizes that a da’wah approach focused too heavily on legalistic and ritual aspects—without considering the community’s sociocultural readiness—may only provoke resistance. Therefore, he prefers an educational, non-coercive approach that seeks to inspire rather than pressure.

“I never force anyone to become a Muslim. But I show them that Islam is simple. Islam can go hand in hand with their lives—as long as they know how,” (Interview with Ustaz Mursyidin, September 10, 2024)

In such situations, Ustaz Mursyidin often begins his da’wah not with religious injunctions, but with Islam’s universal values such as honesty, compassion, mutual aid, and justice (Nurcholish Madjid, 2007). He believes that once these values are internalized, ritual worship will be more easily embraced over time (Sumbulah, 2018). This approach aligns with the spirit of the Prophet Muhammad’s da’wah in Mecca, which prioritized ethical transformation and social values before introducing legal aspects of religion.

From a theoretical perspective, this approach illustrates that Islamic da’wah must take into account the cultural capital and *habits* of the local community (Bourdieu, 2018), while also applying effective cross-cultural communication. The perception among community members that Islam is “too heavy” is, in fact, a natural response to encountering a new belief system that demands a transition in identity and lifestyle. Therefore, da’wah cannot demand immediate change, but must instead serve as a long-term process of accompaniment.

This is where the significance of multicultural da’wah lies: it is not merely about conveying religious messages, but about helping communities build bridges between belief and habit, between shari’a and culture, between ideals and everyday realities. Islam as *rahmatan lil ‘alamin*—a mercy to all creation—is not just a doctrine, but must be experienced as a liberating and meaningful presence within the daily life of society (Sardar, 2005).

Community Response to Islamic Preaching

Although Islam is a minority religion in Penyengat Village, the local community has shown a relatively positive and accepting response to the presence of Ustaz Mursyidin. This acceptance did not happen overnight but was built through continuous social interaction and a humble approach to da'wah. In a community accustomed to living side by side across religious and cultural lines, the key to a preacher's acceptance lies in their social attitude and interpersonal ethics, not merely in their ability to deliver religious sermons.

First, inclusive and humble social behavior. Ustaz Mursyidin's non-judgmental and non-coercive attitude toward his teachings was a major factor in building sympathy among people of different faiths. Residents witnessed firsthand how he participated in village community service, attended non-Muslim celebrations, visited the sick regardless of religion, and was present during times of community grief. This approach breaks down the stereotype that ustaz only cares about Muslims.

"We see that he doesn't discriminate. If someone is in trouble, he comes. If a resident passes away, he helps even if they're of a different religion. That's why we respect him," (Interview with Mrs. Nana (not her real name) on September 19, 2024)

Ustaz Mursyidin's presence as part of the community—not as an "outsider" who thinks he is always right—fosters a strong sense of social connection. He has become a symbol that the presence of Islam is not to change people's beliefs, but to strengthen the collective social power of the village. This strategy highlights the importance of social ethics in da'wah, as emphasized in the teachings of the Prophet SAW.

Second, active involvement in joint activities. The community's positive response is also evident in interfaith participation in Islamic activities. For example, when Penyengat Village hosted the district-level Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an (MTQ) in 2022, all residents of various faiths participated. They contributed funds, worked together to clean the environment, and even provided food for the guests who attended. This serves as tangible evidence that da'wah that is grounded and integrated into social life fosters a sense of shared ownership toward Islamic initiatives ((Interview with Mr. Anton (Village Secretary) on September 19, 2024).

Even during major religious celebrations such as Eid al-Fitr, Christmas, or Vesak, the atmosphere of tolerance is very strong. In some interfaith families, these celebrations become moments of togetherness. Muslim family members will help prepare for Christmas celebrations, and conversely, Christian family members will help serve food during Eid al-Fitr. "We don't see it as a religious issue, but a family issue. As long as there is mutual respect, everything can work out," (Interview with Mrs. Inoi (not her real name) on September 19, 2024). This demonstrates how peaceful pluralism can be achieved not because of shared beliefs, but through openness, communication, and mutual care.

Third, interfaith family cohabitation and daily experiences of diversity. The unique condition of Penyengat Village, where many interfaith families live under one roof, has become a cultural factor that greatly supports the success of Ustaz Mursyidin's da'wah. He does not question the differences within the family but instead integrates himself into the existing social network. In this context, a da'wah approach focused on relationships, rather than just a mission, is essential.

The local community is more receptive to Islamic teachings when da'wah is conducted in a "quiet yet impactful" manner—not through loudspeakers or pulpits, but through the presence of empathy and sincerity. This attitude is what makes Islam in Kampung Penyengat not perceived as a threat, but rather seen as a way of life that can coexist with existing traditions.

Multicultural Da'wah; *Strengthening Harmony*

Da'wah, in its classical sense, is the process of conveying Islamic teachings to society with the aim of encouraging good deeds and discouraging evil (Saputra, 2012). However, in the context of a pluralistic and multicultural society, conventional approaches to da'wah are often no longer adequate. In a heterogeneous society, dakwah cannot stand alone as a one-way communication activity but must be part of a social dialogue that upholds the values of inclusivity, equality, and respect for differences (Pardianto, 2015).

The concept of multicultural dakwah emerges as a response to the diverse social reality. Multicultural dakwah is not merely aimed at conveying

Islamic teachings to other communities, but rather at building spaces for cross-cultural and interfaith encounters and understanding. In Asyura's (2023) view, multicultural dakwah emphasizes the importance of a cultural, empathetic, and communicative approach that does not reduce local traditions or impose a single truth. Such da'wah emphasizes the values of Islam as a blessing for all creation (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*), addressing humanity in a contextual and humanistic manner.

This multicultural da'wah approach is deeply rooted in the da'wah practices of Prophet Muhammad SAW. In many accounts, the Prophet sought to adapt his preaching methods to the social, cultural, and psychological conditions of society. One such example is that he never imposed truth forcefully, but instead used an approach based on wisdom, good counsel, and argumentative dialogue (Q.S. An-Nahl: 125). When dealing with the People of the Book or Arab pagans, the Prophet emphasized the use of storytelling (*al-qashash*), parables, and wisdom in social interactions (Fahrurrozi, 2017).

The da'wah practices carried out by Ustaz Mursyidin in Kampung Penyengat reflect the application of the multicultural da'wah theory mentioned by Asyura (2023), as an approach that values diversity and responds to cultural and religious diversity with empathy and respect. In a society where the majority are non-Muslims, da'wah cannot be conveyed solely through verbal or formalistic means. An inclusive, non-doctrinal approach that values differences as an inescapable social reality is required.

Ustaz Mursyidin does not position himself as a theological figure bearing “absolute truth,” but rather chooses to be a social companion, neighbor, and part of the community. This approach aligns with the spirit of “*rahmatan lil 'alamin*” and the concept of cultural recognition as outlined by Taylor (1994), which emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and valuing other cultural identities as part of human dignity. Through dialogue forums, participation in interfaith events, and involvement in village social work, Ustaz Mursyidin subtly, contextually, and respectfully instills Islamic values (Lukšič Hacin, 2016). Adde (2022) refers to this approach as “religious social adaptation,” which can reduce the potential for conflict and expand acceptance of Islam in indigenous communities.

This strategy emphasizes that multicultural da'wah is not a compromise of Islamic principles but an expression of social and cultural intelligence in conveying religious messages amid diversity. Islam is present not as a hegemonic force that governs but as an ethical force that inspires (Nahara & Nurcholis, 2022).

On the other hand, the dakwah bil hal approach applied by Ustaz Mursyidin demonstrates the relevance of cultural dakwah theory as presented by (Ali & Ismawati, 2021; Indah, 2019; Nuryani et al., 2019). When Islam is not merely communicated through sermons but is embodied through social actions, exemplary behavior, and active participation in community life, da'wah becomes more impactful and leaves a lasting impression on the consciousness of the people. Islam, as seen in the form of assistance when people are sick, participation in interfaith celebrations, and courtesy in social interactions, is more easily accepted than Islam that is presented solely through commands and prohibitions.

Furthermore, the cultural negotiation strategy employed when dealing with cultural differences—such as the use of koyok (dogs), consumption of tuak and pork, and traditional wedding ceremonies—illustrates the adaptive and non-confrontational capacity of context-aware da'wah. In this regard, Ustaz Mursyidin practices cross-cultural communication theory, where a preacher not only conveys religious messages but also understands the symbolic language and collective meanings of local culture (Hadisaputra, 2019; Sambas, 2016; Syahputra, 2007). This approach creates an equal dialogue, where Islam does not appear as a judging force but as a value offering alternatives and a path to peace. In this context, da'wah communication in a multicultural setting is not just about language but also about the symbolic meanings embedded in local customs, rituals, and norms (Huda, 2016). Therefore, a preacher needs to have cultural sensitivity so as not to be trapped in religious bias or identity superiority. Such da'wah is more performative, emphasizing exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*) rather than discourse dominance.

The phenomenon of interfaith families living under one roof becomes the most concrete space where this da'wah communication is tested. In a family consisting of Muslims, Christians, and Buddhists, a verbal approach that highlights doctrinal differences would be difficult to accept. However,

through an affective and relational approach, Ustad Mursyidin successfully built trust and respect that grew naturally. In interviews, some residents stated that they did not feel judged or directly preached to, but rather felt invited to speak as friends.

“When Ustadz talks about religion, he does so gently. He doesn't force it. Sometimes he just tells stories, sometimes while working. But we understand his meaning.”
(Interview with Mrs. Nana (not her real name) on September 19, 2024)

Here, it is evident that da'wah is no longer positioned as an effort to change beliefs, but as a process of building mutual understanding, bringing together shared values such as compassion, mutual aid, and mutual respect. Islam is not presented in the form of dogmatic calls, but as a narrative of life lived together (R. Santoso et al., 2017).

This approach demonstrates that cultural sensitivity is an indispensable competency for a preacher living and preaching in a multicultural space. Cross-cultural communication theory emphasizes that communication that fails to read the cultural context tends to create resistance and conflict. Conversely, communication rooted in empathy, adaptation, and local symbols has the power to break down walls of difference and build bridges of collaboration (Zulfikar, 2022).

Ustad Mursyidin demonstrates that Islamic messages can be packaged in a “*social language*” that is more acceptable across faiths without losing their substantive meaning. Islam is present not as an authority that changes, but as a presence that flows with the life of the community, slowly permeating their daily lives, and ultimately accepted not because it is commanded, but because it is felt (Abdullah, 2017).

Equally important, Ustad Mursyidin's da'wah practices also reflect the dynamics of power relations in a minority context. In the position of Muslims as a small group amidst the dominance of other beliefs, power is not exercised through formal structures or numerical majorities, but through moral authority, social legitimacy, and strong interpersonal relationships (Jamal Ghofir & Khoiriyah, 2022; Kadriyah, 2024). Ustad Mursyidin demonstrates that trust and acceptance within the community can be built not through coercion, but through an approach based on recognition and participation.

In other words, the da'wah practiced in Kampung Penyengat is not merely a religious practice but also a model for peaceful social transformation. Dakwah serves as a strengthener of harmony, a bridge between identities, and a reinforcer of human values that transcend religion and culture (Burhanuddin Jalal*, Amnah Saayah Ismail, 2018; Maftuchah, 2017; Rojikin, 2022). Ustaz Mursyidin adopts the principle of gradualism in conveying sharia—prioritizing an educational approach and building emotional closeness first. This approach aligns with the Prophet's method of dakwah in the Makkah era: gradual, courteous, and based on exemplary behavior (Sajadi, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study shows that da'wah practices in multicultural societies—especially in the context of Islam as a minority religion—require an inclusive, cultural, and dialogical approach. Ustaz Mursyidin, as a central figure in this study, applies adaptive da'wah strategies through dakwah bil hal, cultural negotiation, and active participation in the social life of the Kampung Penyengat community. This approach not only successfully builds acceptance of Islamic values among non-Muslim residents but also strengthens social harmony and interfaith solidarity. The strategies emphasize the importance of sensitivity to local cultural contexts, respect for differing beliefs, and empathetic cross-cultural communication. Ustaz Mursyidin does not position Islam as a dominant discourse but as a friendly and meaningful way of life in the daily lives of the community. Thus, effective da'wah in a pluralistic community is not instructional or hegemonic but rooted in social relationships, exemplary behavior, and cross-identity collaboration. This research enriches the discourse on multicultural da'wah and provides an example of transformative practices that can be replicated in similar communities.

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