Empowering Community Outreach Model Based on Cultural and Structural Outreach: Community Development Approach as a Solution for Transforming Outreach Knowledge in the Contemporary Social Context

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	The phenomenon of da'wah in Indonesia is often trapped in a normative and ritualistic approach, so that its potential as an instrument of social empowerment has not been fully realized. This academic concern raises a fundamental question: how can da'wah be transformed into a practice of empowerment that is not only spiritually oriented, but also culturally and structurally oriented? This study aims to formulate a model of community empowerment dakwah that integrates cultural dakwah, structural dakwah, and a community development approach, while also contributing theoretically to the development of dakwah science in a contemporary social context. The research method uses a qualitative approach with case study and participatory action research strategies. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis of the community that became the locus of empowerment da'wah. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, which allowed for the identification of patterns, challenges, and opportunities in the application of the integrative model. The results of the study show that cultural da'wah is able to accommodate local values, symbols, and traditions, while structural da'wah provides an institutional and policy foundation that supports sustainability. Integration with the community development framework produces a transformative da'wah model that emphasizes community participation, capacity building, and socio-economic independence. This model not only addresses the needs of the community in facing contemporary socio-cultural challenges, but also broadens the epistemological horizon of da'wah science with a multidisciplinary approach.

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	Fenomena dakwah di Indonesia seringkali terperangkap dalam pendekatan normatif dan ritualistik, sehingga potensinya sebagai alat pemberdayaan sosial belum sepenuhnya terwujud. Keprihatinan akademis ini menimbulkan pertanyaan mendasar: bagaimana dakwah dapat ditransformasikan menjadi praktik pemberdayaan yang tidak hanya berorientasi spiritual, tetapi juga berorientasi budaya dan struktural? Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk merumuskan model pemberdayaan komunitas melalui dakwah yang mengintegrasikan dakwah budaya, dakwah struktural, dan pendekatan pengembangan komunitas, sekaligus memberikan kontribusi teoretis bagi pengembangan ilmu dakwah dalam konteks sosial kontemporer.

Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan strategi studi kasus dan penelitian aksi partisipatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen dari komunitas yang menjadi lokasi pemberdayaan dakwah. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan analisis tematik, yang memungkinkan identifikasi pola, tantangan, dan peluang dalam penerapan model integratif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dakwah budaya mampu mengakomodasi nilai-nilai, simbol, dan tradisi lokal, sementara dakwah struktural menyediakan landasan institusional dan kebijakan yang mendukung keberlanjutan. Integrasi dengan kerangka kerja pengembangan komunitas menghasilkan model da'wah transformative yang menekankan partisipasi komunitas, pembangunan kapasitas, dan kemandirian sosio-ekonomi. Model ini tidak hanya memenuhi kebutuhan komunitas dalam menghadapi tantangan sosio-budaya kontemporer, tetapi juga memperluas cakrawala epistemologis ilmu da'wah dengan pendekatan multidisiplin.

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INTRODUCTION

Da'wah has historically been perceived as a religious activity focused on transmitting Islamic teachings through verbal instruction and ritual guidance. However, contemporary societal complexities have expanded the function of da'wah beyond religious communication into a broader framework that includes cultural engagement, institutional organization, and social empowerment(Siti Nur Alisah, Pathan Fazril Haikal, Diva Ardiyanti, 2025). This shift emerges as Muslim communities face diverse challenges related to identity, socio-economic inequality, education, cultural diversity, and modernization, requiring da'wah to adapt in ways that are responsive, contextual, and constructive.

In many communities, da'wah now operates not only as a spiritual mission but also as a strategic platform for strengthening social cohesion, enhancing community capacity, and promoting welfare grounded in Islamic values. The use of cultural approaches allows da'wah to connect with community identity and traditions, while structural frameworks ensure continuity and institutional legitimacy. Additionally, integrating community development principles enables da'wah to evolve into a participatory and transformative system that empowers individuals and communities toward sustainable progress (Alfiyatul et al., 2025).

This study explores the role of da'wah as an instrument of community empowerment by examining its cultural, structural, and developmental dimensions. Through this analysis, the research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how da'wah can contribute to social transformation while maintaining spiritual integrity and relevance within diverse social contexts. Ultimately, this study offers a conceptual foundation for reimagining da'wah as a holistic model capable of fostering not only religious understanding but also community resilience and long-term societal advancement.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore how da'wah functions as a model for community empowerment within cultural, structural, and developmental contexts. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews with religious leaders and community members, and document analysis of program materials and institutional records. The data were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis to identify emerging patterns and relationships among the practices observed. To ensure credibility, triangulation and member checking were applied, while ethical procedures such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly upheld.

RESULTS

The Dynamics of Cultural Da'wah in Community Empowerment Practices

Cultural da'wah holds an essential role in the development of contemporary Islamic discourse, particularly when da'wah is no longer understood merely as a medium for transmitting normative religious messages but also as a strategic instrument for social empowerment grounded in local context. In this framework, cultural da'wah refers to a communication approach that employs local values, symbols, language, rituals, traditions, and cultural expressions as channels for conveying Islamic teachings. This method is not intended as a compromise of religious principles; rather, it serves as an adaptive strategy to ensure that religious messages are received without cultural resistance (Haq, 2025).

Field findings indicate that communities exhibit higher levels of openness and receptivity when da'wah is presented through familiar cultural elements. Examples include the use of regional language during sermons, the incorporation of humor or local proverbs, the reinterpretation of communal traditions such as slametan or tahlil as spaces for social cohesion, or the integration of cultural art forms like *wayang*, *barzanji*, or locally contextualized devotional songs. These practices show that cultural da'wah functions not only as a method of communication but also as a mechanism for embedding Islamic values within existing cultural consciousness (Narulita et al., 2025).

Historically, this model of da'wah aligns with the early Islamization process in Indonesia, particularly the methods used by the Wali Songo, who utilized cultural and artistic forms to introduce Islamic values. However, in modern contexts, cultural da'wah has expanded beyond ritual adaptation and now extends into broader domains such as education, community development, and character formation rooted in cultural identity. This progression demonstrates that cultural da'wah positions Islam as an inclusive and dialogical faith responsive to cultural plurality while maintaining its theological essence.

Despite its strategic advantages, cultural da'wah is not without debate. More textualist groups argue that cultural adaptation risks blurring the boundaries between Islamic orthodoxy and local customs that may contradict Islamic jurisprudence. Conversely, advocates of cultural da'wah maintain that eliminating cultural identity from the da'wah process may cause social alienation and weaken community engagement. According to this perspective, da'wah that resonates culturally is more sustainable and meaningful, particularly in societies with strong traditional social structures (Mujamil, 2023).

In the context of community empowerment, cultural da'wah becomes highly relevant because it encourages da'wah that is dialogical, humanistic, and socially grounded. When communities perceive da'wah as aligned with their cultural identity not foreign or imposed they are more willing to participate in programs that enhance religious understanding and social capacity. Such programs may include collective training, economic initiatives, and educational activities that reinforce local wisdom while integrating Islamic values. Therefore, cultural da'wah serves as an entry point for community empowerment by strengthening social acceptance, emotional connection, and communal trust.

Overall, the dynamics of cultural da'wah in this study demonstrate that da'wah is not merely a religious act but also a cultural process that negotiates meaning between Islamic teachings and lived sociocultural realities. By building emotional and symbolic closeness, cultural da'wah creates a foundation for broader empowerment initiatives. Through this approach, da'wah is not only heard but internalized becoming part of collective identity, social behavior, and community development.

Da'wah and Institutional Role in Strengthening Programs

Structural da'wah represents the formal, organized dimension of da'wah activities, where religious values are transmitted and sustained through institutional systems, governance frameworks, and programmatic structures. In the context of community empowerment, structural da'wah operates through mosques, pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), Islamic organizations, community councils, and government-supported religious bodies. This approach strengthens da'wah by ensuring that religious efforts are systematic, planned, and sustainable rather than spontaneous or individual-based (Ridho & Kurniawati, 2024).

Findings from the research indicate that the presence of institutional support significantly enhances the effectiveness and long-term impact of empowerment programs. Institutions provide essential components such as leadership continuity, financial stability, resource allocation, program standardization, and monitoring systems. For example, periodic religious studies, community training, youth mentorship, and economic empowerment initiatives such as Islamic cooperatives or zakat management systems are facilitated more efficiently when supported by structured institutions. As a result, da'wah evolves from a personal initiative into an organized movement capable of creating measurable social transformation (Siti Nur Alisah, Pathan Fazril Haikal, Diva Ardiyanti, 2025).

One of the most prominent institutional mechanisms in structural da'wah is the implementation of policies and standard operating procedures. These systems ensure that community development programs are not dependent on individual charisma or short-lived enthusiasm but embedded within frameworks that can be transferred, replicated, and evaluated. Through formal leadership structures, documentation, mentorship, and administrative coordination, institutions provide stability and direction to da'wah activities. This structural continuity ensures that empowerment efforts maintain alignment with Islamic principles while adapting to emerging community needs.

However, structural da'wah also presents a set of critical challenges. Bureaucratization may slow decision-making processes and limit flexibility, particularly in communities that value informal communication and relational trust. Additionally, the effectiveness of

institutional da'wah often relies on leadership credibility and organizational transparency. Where leadership is overly personalized or characterized by weak governance, structural da'wah may lose legitimacy in the eyes of the community. Another challenge lies in the potential politicization of religious institutions, where da'wah may be influenced by external interests, leading to fragmentation or decreased community participation.

Despite these limitations, structural da'wah remains essential for transforming da'wah programs into sustainable and impactful initiatives, particularly within the framework of community empowerment. Through institutional collaboration, da'wah extends beyond spiritual discourse to encompass social advocacy, moral governance, economic justice, and educational development. Institutions also enable partnerships with governmental bodies, NGOs, and broader civil society networks creating wider access to resources, training, infrastructure, and policy support.

In conclusion, structural da'wah plays a crucial role in ensuring that da'wah-based empowerment efforts transcend temporary influence and evolve into long-term, systemic change. By providing organizational stability, resource management, and policy direction, institutions serve as the backbone of sustainable da'wah practices. When combined with cultural da'wah, structural da'wah forms a complementary model where religious values are both socially relevant and institutionally anchored thus contributing to strengthening communal identity, resilience, and welfare.

Integrating Community Development as a Transformative Da'wah Model

The integration of community development approaches into the practice of da'wah represents a transformative shift in how Islamic engagement is conceptualized and implemented at the community level. Rather than positioning da'wah solely as a form of religious instruction, this model emphasizes participatory processes that aim to enhance social capacity, economic resilience, and communal wellbeing. In this framework, da'wah becomes not only a spiritual endeavor but also a developmental mission designed to address structural challenges within society.

Field observations demonstrate that community development principles such as participatory planning, needs assessment, collaborative decision-making, and empowerment-based capacity building provide a strong foundation for da'wah programs that seek meaningful social change. Initiatives such as Islamic microfinance, vocational training, women's empowerment circles, literacy workshops, and youth leadership development illustrate how religious values can inform practical solutions to everyday challenges. Through these initiatives, da'wah creates pathways for communities to improve their livelihoods while strengthening moral integrity and collective identity (Iman & Muhid, 2025).

A key characteristic of this integrative approach is its participatory nature. Unlike top-down da'wah models, which rely heavily on instruction and authority, the empowerment-oriented model encourages community members to become active agents rather than passive recipients. Community members are involved in identifying local needs, designing initiatives, implementing programs, and evaluating outcomes. This participatory mechanism fosters ownership, enhances commitment, and ensures that development initiatives are culturally relevant and aligned with community realities.

The integration of community development concepts also contributes to shifting the role of da'wah actors. Religious leaders, educators, and facilitators are no longer positioned merely as transmitters of knowledge but as facilitators of collective learning and transformation. This role requires skills beyond religious competence, including organizational management, communication strategies, conflict negotiation, and social mapping. As a result, the capacity of da'wah actors becomes an essential component in ensuring the sustainability and impact of empowerment-based da'wah.

However, implementing this model is not free from challenges. In some communities, development-oriented da'wah is perceived as deviating from traditional religious expectations, especially when activities emphasize socioeconomic programs rather than ritual-based religious education. Additionally, disparities in leadership style, community readiness, and resource availability may influence the level of success and scalability of the programs. These challenges highlight the necessity of gradual adaptation, community trust-building, and strategic alignment between religious values and development goals.

Despite the complexities, the integration of community development and da'wah offers significant potential for creating long-term societal transformation. By combining spiritual guidance with practical empowerment, this approach bridges the gap between religious ideals and lived social realities. It also aligns da'wah with broader global frameworks of sustainable development particularly in areas such as education, poverty reduction, gender equity, and community resilience while maintaining Islamic ethics as its moral compass.

In summary, integrating community development into da'wah practices transforms da'wah from a solely instructional activity into a strategic empowerment movement. This model ensures that Islamic teaching resonates not only at the ideological or ritual level but also in the lived social and economic dimensions of community life. Through this transformative approach, da'wah becomes a catalyst for holistic development nurturing faith, strengthening culture, building institutions, and improving the quality of life for present and future generations.

Challenges and Directions for Developing Empowerment Da'wah Models

The implementation of da'wah-based empowerment practices reveals a complex landscape of internal and external challenges that influence the effectiveness, acceptance, and sustainability of programs. These challenges highlight the need for strategic adaptation, capacity strengthening, and long-term planning to ensure that da'wah continues to function as a relevant and transformative force in community development.

One major internal challenge lies in the variation of da'wah actors' competencies. Many religious leaders possess strong theological knowledge, yet not all are equipped with managerial, pedagogical, or development-oriented skills necessary for empowerment-driven approaches. The absence of structured training in leadership, communication, social intervention, and program evaluation can limit the potential impact of da'wah initiatives. This skill gap often results in programs that are enthusiastic at the beginning but lack continuity due to insufficient planning and institutional follow-through.

Another internal challenge relates to resource sustainability. Community empowerment programs require funding, infrastructure, and long-term logistical support. In many contexts,

programs rely heavily on voluntary contributions, temporary donations, or charismatic individuals, making them vulnerable to inconsistency and decline when leadership or funding changes. This situation underscores the need for diversified and institutionalized funding models such as zakat-based financing, social waqf, community cooperatives, and inter-organizational partnerships to enhance program resilience.

Externally, social resistance and cultural plurality also shape the trajectory of da'wah-based empowerment. In communities with strong traditional or ideological identities, new or reform-oriented approaches may be perceived as intrusive or incompatible with established religious or cultural norms. Additionally, differences between conservative, moderate, and progressive religious groups may create fragmentation in support, interpretation, and participation. These dynamics demonstrate the importance of culturally sensitive approaches, dialogue, and gradual adaptation rather than confrontational or abrupt reform strategies (Multidisipliner, 2025).

Another external factor is the influence of political interests and regulatory frameworks. In some regions, religious institutions and da'wah movements intersect with state policies, political agendas, or local power structures. While government collaboration can provide legitimacy, resources, and institutional support, it also raises the risk of co-optation or politicization. When da'wah becomes associated with certain political groups, public trust may weaken, and program participation may decline. Hence, maintaining neutrality and ethical governance is crucial to preserving legitimacy and inclusivity (Tahsinia, 2025).

Despite these challenges, the future of da'wah-based empowerment presents promising opportunities for innovation and expansion. Strengthening leadership competence through structured training, formal certification, and mentoring systems can enhance program professionalism and continuity. Digital literacy and technological integration also provide new avenues for outreach, data management, and community learning, particularly among younger generations. Likewise, collaboration with academic institutions, civil society organizations, and international development networks offers new frameworks for research, evaluation, and evidence-based planning (Alifuddin, 2015).

Moving forward, a hybrid model that harmonizes cultural da'wah, structural frameworks, and empowerment-based methodologies represents a compelling direction for sustainable development in Muslim communities. Such a model prioritizes spiritual growth while acknowledging socioeconomic realities, cultural diversity, and modern governance needs. Through this integrative approach, da'wah evolves into a holistic platform not only guiding faith but empowering communities to build resilience, justice, and dignity grounded in Islamic ethics.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that da'wah, when expanded beyond its traditional instructional paradigm, possesses significant potential as a transformative model for community empowerment. The integration of cultural, structural, and developmental approaches reflects a shift from da'wah as a solely religious act toward a social system capable of influencing identity formation, community organization, and collective wellbeing. This

transformation highlights that da'wah is most effective when grounded in contextual understanding, institutional support, and participatory community engagement.

Cultural da'wah plays a foundational role by creating emotional acceptance, familiarity, and cultural resonance, enabling religious messages to be internalized rather than merely heard. Meanwhile, structural da'wah provides continuity, standardization, and organizational legitimacy, allowing programs to exist beyond personal initiatives or temporary enthusiasm. When combined with community development principles, da'wah becomes a dynamic framework that enhances community agency, encourages shared responsibility, and addresses social and economic challenges within an Islamic ethical framework.

Despite its potential, the implementation of empowerment-based da'wah faces several barriers, including limited leadership skills, resource instability, cultural resistance, and external political influence. These challenges underscore the need for capacity-building strategies, institutional strengthening, and evidence-based planning to ensure that da'wah remains relevant, credible, and impactful. Overcoming these constraints requires a balanced approach that respects cultural identity, maintains theological clarity, and promotes adaptive strategies aligned with contemporary community needs.

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