



## The Transformation of Da'wah Communication Patterns among Religious Guides of Persatuan Islam

Anggit Garnita<sup>1\*</sup> & Muminatul Zannah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>12</sup>UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung, Indonesia

\*[anggit.garnita@uinsgd.ac.id](mailto:anggit.garnita@uinsgd.ac.id)

### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the discussion on the transformation of da'wah communication patterns among religious guides of Persatuan Islam is to examine Persis as a da'wah organization in which shifts have occurred in the ways da'wah messages are delivered. These shifts are influenced by various underlying factors affecting Persis religious guides in the process of da'wah transformation. This phenomenon is analyzed using Everett M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory, which includes the construction of innovation, the use of communication channels, the innovation decision-making process, and the social system related to the achievement of goals. This study aims to describe the construction of transformed communication patterns among Persis preachers based on their own understanding and experiences. This research employs a qualitative approach using a phenomenological method. The method is expected to provide a comprehensive depiction of the transformation of communication patterns among religious guides of Persatuan Islam. Data collection techniques include observation and in-depth interviews. Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that a transformation in communication patterns has occurred among Persatuan Islam religious guides, encompassing both content and rhetorical dimensions. Previously, da'wah activities conducted by Persatuan Islam religious guides were oriented toward fiqh-based studies. Over time, however, the content of da'wah has transformed in accordance with evolving social issues. Transformation has also taken place in the rhetorical dimension. Whereas the earlier approach was agitational, rigid, and polemical, in the era of globalization Persatuan Islam religious guides now employ adaptive and persuasive communication approaches in their da'wah activities.*

**Keywords:** *Diffusion of innovation; phenomenology; religious guides; transformation.*

### INTRODUCTION

Organisasi dakwah Persatuan Islam, known as Persis, has a long history. It originated from a small group that actively organized discussions on issues

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concerning the condition of Islam at that time. This emergence took place during a period marked by the escalation of civilization alongside the stagnation of Islamic intellectual discourse, which was constrained by the prevailing view that the door of *ijtihad* had been closed (Koswara, 2014).

Persis emerged from religious discussions. Several historical studies note that the roots of Persis can be traced to a small group in Bandung that actively engaged in discussions about the condition of the Muslim community and the need for the renewal of Islamic thought in the early 20th century. These discussions later developed into a formal da'wah organization on 12 September 1923 (Eliwatis et al., 2022). The early activities of Persis were not merely formal in nature; they included *tadarrus* assemblies, discussion groups, hadith studies, the publication of magazines, and book printing, before eventually evolving into a larger and more structured da'wah organization (Eliwatis et al., 2022). The history and early character of Persis reflect its identity as a movement of Islamic reform that emphasized study, discussion, education, and da'wah as the foundation of an organization that grew out of a small study community (Usman, 2022).

Carrying the spirit of *ijtihad*, Persis positioned itself against what it viewed as stagnant and conservative Islamic cultural practices at the time. From its early phase, Persis regarded TBC (*tabayul*, *bid'ah*, and *keburafat*—superstition, religious innovation, and myth) as parasites in religious life that needed to be eliminated. On the one hand, these practices were perceived by conservative communities as religious facts that should not be removed; on the other hand, Persis firmly sought to eradicate TBC practices in the name of religious purification. This stance was based on the assumption that the authenticity of religion must be grounded in the Qur'an and Hadith. From its inception, Persis carried a mission of purification and *ijtihad*, positioning itself in opposition to traditional and conservative Islamic religious practices (Yulianto & Suparto, 2025).

Persis, as a da'wah organization, has a primary objective: the comprehensive implementation of Islamic teachings across various aspects of life. Its presence within society brings a distinctive character to its da'wah activities. Persis is often perceived as firm and uncompromising in conveying Islamic messages. According to Siddiq Amien, Persis da'wah is regarded as assertive, straightforward, and even harsh, to the extent that merely hearing its name can make many people feel apprehensive (Mughtar, 1998). The firmness and strictness in the delivery of da'wah by religious guides within the Persis environment are closely related to the belief that

da'wah messages must be conveyed even when they are bitter and contradict long-standing societal practices.

According to Afif Muhammad (Muchtar, 1998), Persis is a movement that actively participates in efforts to reform and purify Islamic teachings and practices. Proper understanding and practice of Islamic teachings are considered essential and must align with the example set by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). All ritual practices and beliefs that are not consistent with the Prophet's teachings are viewed as *bid'ah* and *keburafat*.

Based on this understanding, Persatuan Islam tends to adopt a polemical style of da'wah communication. This approach stems from the conviction that, in matters of religion, there can be no compromise. Anything deemed inconsistent with the evidences found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah is firmly rejected by Persatuan Islam. Conversely, anything considered to be true must be conveyed, even if it is bitter to accept.

The organization maintains a firm da'wah strategy and is often uncompromising toward religious issues that are considered to deviate from its interpretation of the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This approach reflects Persis's textual and puritan orientation in responding to traditional religious practices, resulting in its da'wah frequently triggering debates and polemics among Muslim communities that adhere to different traditions (Yulianto & Suparto, 2025; Padlurahman, 2024). Several local studies even note that Persis's perspective in da'wah holds that, in matters of religion, "there is no such thing as compromise." Consequently, anything deemed incorrect must be rejected without negotiation, even if it leads to conflicts of understanding within society (Risidiana, 2024).

With its firm communication pattern as a characteristic of Persatuan Islam's da'wah, the organization is often engaged in the dimension of debate, both as an effort to safeguard its religious convictions and to demonstrate that the belief concepts held by opposing groups are considered incorrect. According to Siddiq Amien:

"Persis, as a strong point of da'wah in Indonesia, was in its early emergence widely recognized among the Muslim community through its Islamic intellectual maneuvers and its *shock therapy*-oriented approach. Its contributions were significant and influential, even providing a distinctive framework within the Muslim community, particularly in matters related to **creed** (*'aqidah*), worship (*ibadah*), and **morality** (*akhlak*)" (Muchtar, 1998).

For some segments of the Muslim community who are critical and well educated, the da'wah communication pattern employed by Persatuan Islam has brought about changes in stagnant ways of thinking and behavior characterized by *jumud*, *taqlid*, *keburafat*, *bid'ah*, *takbayul*, and *shirk*, toward practices that are more aligned with the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. However, for other segments of society, the da'wah carried out by Persatuan Islam is difficult to accept, as it may offend individuals who practice Islam differently. Inclusive da'wah emphasizes that in order to reach diverse segments of society, da'wah approaches must adapt to local cultural contexts and not rely solely on a uniform or generalized approach. Inclusive da'wah is understood as a form of da'wah that respects cultural, social, and belief diversity within society, while emphasizing values of tolerance, participation, and respect for local wisdom (Hayati et al., 2025).

Da'wah should be capable of transforming all segments of society, not only targeting the middle-upper class or those with higher educational backgrounds, but also reaching and being accepted by all social strata. Samsir and Mahmuddin (2025) explicitly state that da'wah in multicultural societies must be inclusive, tolerant, and adaptive in order to be accepted by diverse communities with different cultural and social backgrounds. Meanwhile, Yuandari (2025) employs a modern communication technology perspective to demonstrate that inclusive da'wah can serve as a bridge between cultures and reach broader segments of society. Wardah et al. (2025) further highlight the importance of inclusive da'wah as a form of religious moderation that creates space for dialogue and mutual understanding among different social groups.

Over time, in the course of its da'wah activities, Persis has shown significant changes in the patterns of communication conveyed to its *mad'u*. Whereas in the past Persis was known for being firm and strict in delivering its da'wah messages, some religious guides within Persis have begun to communicate their da'wah by taking greater account of the conditions and characteristics of the *mad'u*. Analyses of the transformation of Persis's da'wah leadership model reveal a shift in da'wah communication from merely "explaining Islam" toward a more contextual and progressive approach that responds to the challenges of the times (Zaenudin et al., 2024). Changes in Persis's da'wah patterns, as seen in comparisons between earlier and newer approaches, indicate a transformation in the methods of Persis preachers. These preachers have experienced a "new trend" in da'wah activities, namely seeking to gain as much public sympathy as

possible, employing more engaging styles of speech, and incorporating repeated elements of humor to make their messages appealing and well received (Nurmawan, 2020). The transformation in da'wah communication patterns carried out by Persatuan Islam's religious guides has been driven by various factors, including advances in communication and information technology as well as changes in societal lifestyles. As explained by Mufti Fauzi Rahman, new approaches to da'wah have emerged through the development of digital content within Persis-affiliated organizations (such as *Pemudi Persis* and *Persistri*) as a response to shifts in da'wah media in modern society (Rahman, 2025).

Changes in societal communication patterns have had an impact on the communication styles of Persis religious guides. The adaptation of Persis da'wah, including the utilization of digital media and openness to contemporary issues, has influenced the way Persis communicates its da'wah messages (Yulianto & Suparto, 2025). Persis religious guides adjust their communication patterns in order to remain effective in providing guidance and direction to the Muslim community by applying methods deemed appropriate for delivering da'wah messages, so that these messages can be accepted, understood by the *mad'u*, and applied across various dimensions of everyday life.

Changes have also occurred within Persis itself. According to Siddiq Amien, one of these changes originated from the ideas of the former Chairman of Persis, Abdul Latief Muchtar, who proposed that Persis should reformulate its da'wah approach. The previously firm, straightforward, and rigid character of Persis da'wah began to be presented through a much more flexible approach. This shift is evident in the transformation of da'wah communication patterns adopted by Persis religious guides in delivering their da'wah materials (Muchtar, 1998).

Based on the discussion above, the phenomenon of the transformation of Persis da'wah becomes an interesting and important subject of study. There are three fundamental reasons underlying the significance of this research. First, there has been a shift in the manner and messages of da'wah delivery. Second, by identifying the shifts in da'wah practices among Persis religious guides, the new face of Persis as a da'wah movement can be clearly identified. Third, the stages of transformation in the da'wah of Persis religious guides constitute empirical facts that can be examined using Everett M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory, which includes the construction of innovation, the use of communication

channels, the innovation decision-making process, and the social system related to goal attainment.

Previous studies related to Persatuan Islam (Persis) as a da'wah organization have been conducted by various scholars using diverse focuses and approaches. These studies have made important contributions to understanding the character, strategies, and dynamics of Persis da'wah in different social contexts. Among them is a doctoral dissertation by Ihsan Setiadi Latief (2016) entitled *Organizational Communication of Persatuan Islam in Disseminating Persis Religious Ideology and Its Implications for the Organizational Development of Persis in Indonesia*. This study identifies changes in Persis's organizational communication strategies, showing that new methodological approaches and communication patterns have significantly contributed to the growth in membership.

Another dissertation by Beni Ahmad Saebani (2014), *Religious Homogeneity and Behavioral Change among Members of Persatuan Islam in Bandung*, explains that religious homogeneity among Persis members in Bandung—culturally, structurally, and intellectually—is shaped by *Qanun Asasi* and *Qanun Dakhili*, as all members accept the organizational doctrinal system without reservation, in line with organizational traditions. In the political domain, Tiar Anwar Bachtiar (2008) examined *The Intellectual Stance of Persatuan Islam toward New Order Political Policies*, revealing how Persis intellectuals responded to New Order political policies. In the field of da'wah strategy, Fahmi Hayatudin (2015) studied *The Da'wah Strategy of Persatuan Islam in the Context of Reform at the Purwakarta Branch Leadership*, highlighting the establishment of the Persis Purwakarta branch as a response to the need for an organizational movement advocating the enforcement of Islamic doctrine aligned with the Qur'an and the Sunnah. From a historical perspective, Nanang Sutisna (2008) examined *Persatuan Islam (Persis) during the Leadership of K.H.E. Abdurahman (1962–1983)*.

Furthermore, Dede Irawan (2018) conducted an *Ethnography of Communication within the Persatuan Islam Organization*, identifying several factors influencing Persis communication patterns, including the distinctive use of humor among Persis congregants, which tends to be firm and sometimes offensive compared to high-context communication in broader society. An earlier seminal study by Howard M. Federspiel (1970), *Persatuan Islam: Islamic Reform in Twentieth-Century Indonesia*, characterizes Persis as both a puritan and modernist Islamic organization. Although numerous studies have examined Persatuan Islam from various perspectives such as

organizational communication, religious ideology, political attitudes, da'wah strategies, puritan Islamic identity, and communication ethnography these studies have not specifically positioned religious guides (Persis mubaligh) as the main subjects in examining the transformation of da'wah communication patterns in response to social change and globalization. Therefore, a significant research gap remains: the absence of an in-depth and focused study on the transformation of da'wah communication patterns among Persis religious guides, analyzed from the subjective experiences of the mubaligh themselves and framed through Everett M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations perspective.

This research seeks to fill that gap by emphasizing the dimensions of da'wah content and rhetoric, as well as the communication adaptation processes of Persis religious guides in responding to societal dynamics and the challenges of globalization. Accordingly, the objectives of this study, derived from the research questions, are as follows, to analyze the factors that drive the transformation of da'wah communication patterns among Persis religious guides. Secondly, to describe how the transformation process of Persis religious guides unfolds.

The expected outcomes of this study are to gain a deeper understanding of da'wah communication dynamics within the context of the Persatuan Islam organization and to contribute to the development of da'wah methods that are more effective and relevant to contemporary conditions, thereby improving the quality of da'wah message delivery so that it is more readily accepted by congregations. Academically, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how da'wah communication processes change over time under the influence of various factors. The findings may also be used to develop more effective da'wah communication models that are relevant to present-day contexts.

The research method employed in this study is categorized as qualitative research, as the focus of the investigation is the transformation of communication patterns among religious guides within the Persatuan Islam (Persis) organization. According to Creswell, qualitative research is an inquiry aimed at understanding a central phenomenon (J. R. Raco, 2013). The central phenomenon examined in this study is the transformation of da'wah communication among Persis religious guides.

Furthermore, in conducting this research, the researcher does not attempt to intervene in the research subjects. This includes refraining from influencing opinions, avoiding any form of coercion during interviews, and

not engaging with informants in a manner that would compromise objectivity (Creswell, 1998). The purpose of this approach is to maintain objectivity in observing the phenomenon of transformation in Persis da'wah communication.

In terms of approach, this study adopts a qualitative research design as a methodological framework that provides guidelines for conducting research through a subjective approach to exploring social phenomena. The focus of this study is to explain the phenomena experienced by religious guides within the Persatuan Islam organization from the perspective of the actors or research subjects themselves. This research seeks to observe the existing conditions and contexts of communication patterns among Persis religious guides as understood from their subjective viewpoints. Therefore, the objects of observation are directly examined by the researcher.

This study employs a phenomenological method. This method describes individual experiences as phenomena. By using this approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive depiction of the transformation of da'wah communication patterns among Persis religious guides. Maulana and Budiyono (2024) offer a theoretical framework on how phenomenology is used to understand subjective experiences in the context of human communication, including how such experiences give meaning to the communication phenomena experienced by individuals.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Core and Objectives of Persatuan Islam's Da'wah: Theological Purification and Educational Empowerment**

The founding of Persatuan Islam was rooted in the conviction that *aqidah* (creed) cannot possibly be upheld without eradicating the disease of *tawhid*, namely *shirk* (polytheism). This is because two fundamentally different things cannot be born or exist simultaneously. Beyond matters of *aqidah*, Persatuan Islam also considers it essential to preserve the purity of religious worship practices, free from *bid'ah* (religious innovations). These two fundamental points are the reasons Persatuan Islam has a core da'wah orientation whose authenticity has been maintained to this day. This is because Persatuan Islam holds that *aqidah* cannot truly live without eliminating *shirk*; likewise, the *sunnah* cannot develop without eradicating innovative practices, and the spirit of critical inquiry (*ruhul intiqad*) cannot



be revived without abolishing *taqlid* (blind imitation). (Qanun Asasi dan Qanun Dahili Persatuan Islam, 1968)

The general objective of the da'wah of Persatuan Islam emphasizes an invitation to return to firmly adhering to the Al-Qur'an and the Sunnah. This is followed by an encouragement to preserve the Sunnah of the Prophet, encompassing various aspects of life. At the practical level, the Sunnah as understood by Persatuan Islam is often associated

Second, another important aspect that becomes a focus of the general da'wah objectives of Persatuan Islam is the educational da'wah movement. This involves establishing places of worship such as *surau*, mosques, and *musola* as spaces that provide enlightenment for the community. Mosques function as centers where ideas and initiatives aimed at the advancement of civilization are generated and developed.

An interview with Oim Abdurohim (Head of the Library and Documentation Staff of Persatuan Islam) explains that mosques managed by congregations affiliated with Persatuan Islam are usually marked with signboards installed at the front of the mosque. The purpose of these signboards is administrative documentation, so that the number of mosques managed by Persatuan Islam congregations can be accurately identified. In addition, the signboards function as an identity marker; if individuals are interested in participating in Persatuan Islam's da'wah studies, the mosque can be easily recognized.

An interview with Nurmawan (Head of the Mosque Management Division) highlights that one major focus of Persatuan Islam's da'wah development lies in the field of formal education. This objective is implemented through the establishment of numerous *pesantren* distributed throughout Indonesia, particularly on the island of Java. Education is organized across multiple levels, ranging from kindergarten (*Taman Kanak-Kanak*), *Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah* (MI), Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools (*Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu / SDIT*), *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs), *Mu'allimin* or *Madrasah Aliyyah* (MA), and culminating in higher education institutions, including Islamic higher education colleges (*Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam / STAI*) and universities.

According to Ihsan (Head of the Information and Communication Division), Persatuan Islam has established more than 200 *pesantren* spread across various regions. Typically, *pesantren* managed by Persatuan Islam employ a numbering system as part of their institutional identity.

Meanwhile, Haris Muslim (Secretary General of Persatuan Islam,

Bandung) explains that the final important point relates to the process of disseminating Persatuan Islam's religious worldview. Among the general objectives of Persatuan Islam's da'wah is the publication of various da'wah media, including magazines, bulletins, and other electronic broadcasts. The purpose of these activities is to cultivate an intelligent and enlightened society that is capable of adapting to the developments of the modern era.

Furthermore, Haris Muslim explains that the process of socialization or externalization of Persatuan Islam's religious worldview is carried out by establishing cooperation with other mass organizations or institutions. By opening spaces for broader social interaction, Persatuan Islam is considered capable of strengthening its religious existence as well as fostering unity among Muslims.

According to Agah Nugraha (Chairman of the Purwakarta Regional Leadership of Persatuan Islam), once the community has attained sufficient competence in the fields of *aqidah*, *mu'amalah*, and *ibadah*, it will subsequently develop a form of immunity against other deviant ideologies. These ideologies must be countered because they pose a threat to the existence of Islamic teachings. This effort involves engaging in all spaces and times, and confronting groups perceived as enemies of Islam through proportional means in accordance with the teachings of the Al-Qur'an and the Sunnah.

### **Communication Transformation of Persatuan Islam's Mubaligh: From Confrontational to Adaptive Da'wah in the Era of Globalization**

Fundamentally, the objective of Persatuan Islam is the comprehensive implementation of Islamic law based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah across all aspects of social life. Persatuan Islam positions itself as an organization with a vision of shaping a society that adopts Islamic teachings, including *shari'a* law, as the guiding framework for social life (Adilan, 2024). The steps considered essential to achieving this goal include: safeguarding the *aqidah* of the ummah and ensuring proper belief; safeguarding acts of worship and ensuring correct religious practice; and safeguarding *mu'amalah* and guiding the community in social transactions by developing and empowering the potential of the *jam'iyah*, so that it may manifest as *shurātun muṣaggharātun 'an al-Islām wa hikmatuhu al-asmā*.

Based on the discussion above, the core of Persatuan Islam's da'wah lies in the purification of Islamic teachings. Consequently, its da'wah

activities frequently revolve around issues of *aqidah* and *ibadah*.

Furthermore, in communicative practice, religious guides (*pembimbing agama*) within Persatuan Islam are perceived as distinct from religious guides in general. Persatuan Islam's religious guides are not closely associated with the *rengkeb* (deferential and affectionate) cultural style of Sundanese tradition, even though the organization's primary constituency is rooted in Sundanese society. This observation is confirmed by Ihsan, who explains:

“Persis grew and emerged from elite circles—*priyayi* and merchants—so perhaps the culture of *bandap asor* and *rengkeb* was not familiar at that time. Just look at the founders of Persis; most of them wore suits. In the past, only respected individuals wore suits.”

From Ihsan's perspective, the communication style of Persatuan Islam inherits the elitist disposition of its founders, who largely came from the upper-middle class, including merchants and traders who were relatively advanced for their time. As a result, *rengkeb* culture is viewed as less prominent in the communicative activities of Persatuan Islam's *mubaligh*. This can be observed, for example, in the gestures of the preachers, who do not customarily kiss the hands of elders. Communication among Persatuan Islam's religious guides exhibits distinctive linguistic patterns and varieties, dominated by theological discourse and shaped more by *pesantren* culture than by local traditional cultures such as Sundanese culture. This results in characteristics that differ from those of traditional local religious guides (Irawan, 2018).

The tradition of debate among the *mubaligh* of Persatuan Islam has long been preserved within *pesantren* activities. Debate has functioned as a distinctive identity of both the *mubaligh* and the organization itself, as Persatuan Islam was built upon a system of values, beliefs, shared assumptions, and collectively agreed-upon norms that serve as guidelines for managing the organization. These elements are collectively referred to as organizational culture (Sutrisno, 2015). Organizational culture represents the values embedded within the communal unity of an organization and internalized by each member of Persatuan Islam. It is formed through shared values and serves as a behavioral guide for organizational members. This conception of organizational culture emphasizes the importance of shared values and assumptions as the foundation of behavioral patterns within the organization (Bogale & Debela, 2024).

Although debate has been an inseparable part of the historical trajectory of Persatuan Islam's da'wah and has functioned as an

organizational identity, over time the method of open debate in da‘wah has gradually been abandoned. Persatuan Islam has begun to transform its da‘wah methods to avoid generating social polemics within the community.

The twenty-first century has brought about diverse challenges for religious communities. Issues such as globalization, the development of democratization, and ideas of religious pluralism are predicted to generate social tensions, as not all segments of society agree with these evolving discourses.

As a result of globalization, religious guides of Persatuan Islam are required to move more rapidly toward inclusivity, engaging with diverse cultures, languages, and religions (Idris, 2010). Whereas previously Persatuan Islam’s religious guides conducted da‘wah from mosque to mosque and from village to village, in the era of globalization they are now expected to expand their da‘wah outreach across multiple spaces, countries, ethnic groups, and even across religious boundaries. Consequently, optimizing da‘wah spaces has become increasingly important.

Haris further notes that this historical legacy serves as a source of motivation, demonstrating that Persatuan Islam’s *mubaligh* are capable of competing with others. In such circumstances, individuals increasingly recognize that the dynamics of globalization demand wisdom and an enlightening approach in responding to social change (Mas’udi, 2016).

Entering the third millennium, the face of the world has changed at a remarkable pace. These transformations are marked, first, by the emergence of a new “renaissance”—an era characterized by the rapid development of knowledge, often referred to as an age of enlightenment in which scientific advancement becomes a key determinant of civilizational progress. Second, the rapid expansion of the information technology revolution has reshaped modes of interaction. With increasingly sophisticated information technologies, Persatuan Islam’s *mubaligh* can no longer remain isolated from global interactions. Through these technologies, they are able to disseminate da‘wah across the world despite vast geographical distances, reaching audiences (*mad’u*) of diverse ethnic, cultural, and even religious backgrounds.

Through platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media, Persatuan Islam’s religious guides can identify themselves as global citizens. Such communicative networks and interaction patterns reflect the position of Persatuan Islam’s religious guides as *animal communication*—beings inherently inclined to continuously establish

communicative relationships with others (Bastomi, 2017).

As a further impact, the sophistication of information technology has fostered openness in cross-identity relationships. The ease with which people can access new religious references has, in turn, led to a shift in religious authority. In other words, society can no longer be compelled to accept a particular religious understanding without first comparing it with alternative perspectives. With open access to diverse references, *mubaligh* are therefore required to become more adaptive to differences—whether related to *fiqh*, ritual practice (*ibadah*), *mu'amalah*, schools of thought (*madhhab*), or even differences in religious belief (Bastomi, 2017).

Within this context of change, the da'wah movement of religious guides of Persatuan Islam has given rise to a form of wisdom in responding to both inter- and intracultural differences. Without providing space for actualization and for engagement with “the other”—whether near or distant—there is a risk that the organization may eventually be abandoned by its own adherents. The currents of globalization and the pace of contemporary development demand adaptive capacities from both individuals and groups.

In Agah Nugraha's account, the transformation of Persatuan Islam's *mubaligh* da'wah has become unavoidable:

“The development of the times cannot be prevented, but being swept away by it is also not a good option. Therefore, we must be able to balance this great vessel by skillfully playing our organizational role in da'wah, and by utilizing contemporary developments as modern da'wah media. It is no longer appropriate, as in the past, for Persis religious guides to be allergic to print or electronic media—whether audio or audiovisual. This is no longer the era of hiding behind mountains or waves; now is the time to rise and take part in filling these spaces. If not us, then who?”

In this explanation, Agah notes that the da'wah carried out by Persatuan Islam's religious guides was initially exclusive, revolving primarily around internal membership. He therefore expresses the expectation that Persatuan Islam's da'wah will increasingly go public, allowing it to be more widely recognized by society at large.

In this discussion, Persatuan Islam's religious guides are examined through the lens of social action theory. Social action refers to individual actions directed toward others that carry meaning both for the actor and for others. Social action contains three key elements: action, purpose, and

understanding. Its defining characteristics include subjective meaning, inward and subjective intentionality, tangible action, positive influence, orientation toward others, and responsiveness to the actions of others (Turner, 2012). According to Max Weber, religion is not merely a system of personal belief but also a guide for social action that shapes social interaction and societal structures (Subekti, 2025).

In this sense, Persatuan Islam's religious guides function as active agents who continuously invite, call upon, and exemplify religious teachings to their audiences (*mad'u*). However, the concept of social action employed here specifically seeks to examine the process of communication transformation among Persatuan Islam's religious guides as part of a consciously intended and planned social process. For Weber, religion is not only a private belief system but also a force that directs collective social action, influencing how individuals and groups interact within broader society such as through persuasive da'wah movements (Subekti, 2025).

Weber further elaborates on social action as follows: "*Sociology is a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences.*" He also identifies four types of social action based on orientation: instrumental rationality, value-rationality, affectual action, and traditional action (Weber, 1978).

Two points are considered crucial in relation to the transformation of communication among Persatuan Islam's religious guides. The first concerns motive, and the second concerns perspectives on the meaning or rationale underlying the transformation itself. When examined closely, Weber's social action theory is oriented toward understanding the motives and goals of actors. Through this theoretical framework, it becomes possible to comprehend the behavior of individuals and groups, each of whom possesses distinct motives and objectives in performing particular actions. This theory can thus be employed to understand different types of action across individuals and groups. By understanding such behaviors, one simultaneously acknowledges and respects the reasons underlying their actions. As Weber suggests, the best way to understand various groups is to appreciate the typical forms of action that characterize them (Jones, 2003). In this way, the reasons behind the transformation in the communication practices of Persatuan Islam's religious guides can be understood.

Building on this reasoning, the application of Weber's social action

analysis is expected to identify the motives underlying the transformation of communication among Persatuan Islam's religious guides. Beyond identifying motives, this theory also enables an understanding of the types of values or motivations that underpin such transformations. Consequently, the reasons for transformation can be uncovered while simultaneously revealing the deeper values sought by social actors.

Drawing upon the concept of existence proposed by Save M. Dagun, it may be argued that within social life, what is most essential for Persatuan Islam's *mubaligh* is their own state of being or existence. Existence can be understood as the notion that the presence of individuals or groups is not static but continuously dynamic—a process of “becoming.” In other words, individuals move from possibility to actuality, or vice versa. What exists today as potential may become reality tomorrow. Because Persatuan Islam's religious guides possess freedom, their development is driven by their own motives. To exist means to have the courage to make decisions that determine one's life; conversely, without the courage to act, one does not truly exist in the fullest sense (Dagun, 1997).

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that Persatuan Islam's religious guides require a space for existence. It is within the dynamic processes of da'wah activity that such existential space is offered. The major ideas that emerge within the intellectual framework of Persatuan Islam's religious guides become reality only when they are enacted. This represents the movement of religious guides from the realm of ideas to the empirical realm. In practice, da'wah is not merely the transmission of normative teachings but a dynamic social activity that seeks to translate Islamic teachings from the domain of ideas into lived practice within contemporary society. This process demonstrates how da'wah organizations construct spaces of existence through concrete da'wah activities that are responsive to societal needs (Ambali, 2025).

### **The Dynamics of Internalization and Diffusion of Da'wah Communication Transformation within Persatuan Islam**

The strategies employed by *mubaligh* (*da'i*) within multicultural societies demonstrate that da'wah activities do not merely communicate religious doctrines but are also translated into empirical social practices that contribute to community cohesion. This aligns with the idea that da'wah, initially situated in the realm of ideas, attains existence through concrete action in the empirical sphere (Faqih, 2023). This perspective resonates

with Abidin's argument that existence is a dynamic process—a continual becoming or being. Etymologically derived from *exsistere*, meaning “to emerge,” “to transcend,” or “to overcome,” existence is neither rigid nor static but elastic and subject to development or decline, depending on one's capacity to actualize inherent potentials (Abidin, 2007).

The dynamics of da'wah activities serve as a vehicle for affirming the roles and functions of religious guides within Persatuan Islam amid diverse challenges. Abidin further emphasizes that existence is closely related to role elasticity; thus, to reinforce their existence, Persatuan Islam's *mubaligh* are required to adapt to varying conditions without relinquishing their core identity.

Religious study gatherings (*pengajian*) are regarded as particularly important, not only as platforms for disseminating religious understanding but also as mechanisms for organizational recruitment and cadre formation. Through *pengajian*, Persatuan Islam is able to directly present and socialize its organizational ideas. As explained by Agah Nugraha:

“In adapting to the times, Persatuan Islam has undergone several changes. Its membership has continued to grow, and its da'wah has increasingly gained public acceptance. According to data recorded in the *Qanun Asasi* and *Qanun Dakhili*, the number of members and sympathizers has reached three million. This indicates quantitative growth and reflects the growing acceptance of Persatuan Islam's religious guides.”

Based on Agah's explanation, three conclusions may be drawn. First, there has been a continual reorientation of da'wah in response to changing times. Second, the transformation of da'wah methods has yielded tangible results in the expansion of Persatuan Islam's outreach. Third, the quantitative growth in membership serves as an indicator that Persatuan Islam's da'wah is increasingly accepted across diverse social groups.

The communicative competence of Persatuan Islam's *mubaligh* is also considered crucial. As articulated by John Searle, words ultimately complete everything, meaning that language used in communication represents intention itself (Searle et al., 2009). In the context of Islamic da'wah, effective persuasive communication—characterized by wise, empathetic, and context-sensitive language—is closely tied to the *mubaligh*'s ability to convey religious messages appropriately (Mursam et al., 2025).

In undertaking these efforts, Persatuan Islam's religious guides consciously engage in social action, with primary consideration given to



goals and the means by which those goals may be achieved. Their actions are clearly directed toward achieving existential continuity and grounding the Qur'an and Sunnah in social reality. These social actions are carefully planned and rationally considered in terms of both objectives and methods.

When viewed through the lens of social action theory, the actions of Persatuan Islam's *mubaligh* may be categorized as instrumentally rational actions. This type of action represents the highest degree of rationality, involving conscious and reasonable choices regarding both the objectives pursued and the means employed to achieve them.

This rational orientation is echoed by Romady Alfian, who emphasizes instrumental values as key drivers of communicative transformation:

“What drives the transformation of Persis da'wah is the desire to continue conveying Qur'anic and Sunnah-based teachings in a way that can be accepted by all segments of society, because Persis' audience is all of humanity.”

To further strengthen the existence of Persatuan Islam's da'wah, transformation has not been limited to communicative flexibility alone but has also encompassed methodological adaptability. According to **Ihsan**, Persatuan Islam's da'wah has become increasingly modern, expanding beyond theological purification issues to address socio-economic and educational concerns. Through the optimization of the *Pusat Zakat Umat* (PZU), Persatuan Islam's da'wah has made significant contributions to community welfare.

Agah further notes that communicative transformation among Persatuan Islam's *mubaligh* is unavoidable, as they cannot escape the heterogeneity of society, which demands openness of thought. This is particularly evident in regions such as Purwakarta, characterized by diverse religious orientations.

From the discussion above, at least two fundamental motives underlying the transformation of communication among Persatuan Islam's religious guides can be identified. First is the imperative of existence, and second is the organization's overarching vision of grounding the Qur'an and Sunnah in social life. As articulated by Agah: “Everyone must understand true Islam according to the Qur'an and Sunnah, and this understanding must be transmitted, because every Muslim has an obligation to convey it.”

Persatuan Islam seeks to enable society to understand and practice

Islamic teachings. This objective is regarded as instrumental by all of its religious guides. This perspective is further illustrated by Eka Permana Habiballah, who stated in a Sundanese sermon that preachers should avoid harsh judgments and instead prioritize empathy and understanding of the audience's psychological conditions.

From Eka's remarks, it may be concluded that Persatuan Islam's religious guides must understand the psychology of their audiences (*mad'u*) and prioritize communicative flexibility. The image of Persatuan Islam's preachers as confrontational figures is increasingly being reevaluated; in an era of openness, a more persuasive da'wah approach is deemed essential. The ultimate goal of da'wah is not merely comprehension but practical application in everyday life.

Similarly, Anwar emphasizes that da'wah transformation is a strategic effort to align religious outreach with contemporary challenges, ensuring that Qur'anic and Sunnah-based teachings are accepted by all segments of society. Persuasive da'wah, fundamentally rooted in humane, gentle, and wise approaches, functions as a stimulus for voluntary change grounded in personal awareness rather than coercion.

Three elements are considered central to the construction of communicative transformation among Persatuan Islam's religious guides: externalization, objectivation, and internalization. These processes shape how transformed communication practices are expressed, institutionalized, and internalized by contemporary *mubaligh*.

As social beings, Persatuan Islam's religious guides cannot exist in isolation. They interact, collaborate, and form groups to fulfill existential and organizational objectives. In the contemporary era, they continue to maintain their presence within broader religious landscapes, including independent religious organizations such as Majelis Ulama Indonesia.

According to Agah, the involvement of Persatuan Islam members in various levels of MUI leadership, as well as their engagement with governmental and private institutions, reflects the organization's expanding da'wah network. Such openness to interaction is viewed positively, enabling Persatuan Islam's religious guides to gain valuable insights while reinforcing their social roles.

Beyond elite organizational circles, the externalization of communicative transformation is also evident among grassroots communities, as indicated by the growing acceptance of Persatuan Islam's religious guides in diverse religious forums. As noted by Romady Alfian,

Persatuan Islam's communicative style has shifted from a predominantly confrontational approach to a more adaptive and persuasive one, shaped by ongoing interaction with broader social environments.

These dynamics confirm that Persatuan Islam's da'wah is increasingly accepted across social strata, driven by intergenerational interaction, engagement with other religious guides, and evolving communication patterns within society.

Changes in patterns of social communication constitute a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors, such as technological advancement, globalization, needs and lifestyles, social and political events, economic development, education, and literacy (Aryaputri, 2021). Changes in societal communication patterns are influenced by several factors, including technological progress marked by the emergence of the internet and social media, which facilitate communication without barriers of distance and time, thereby transforming the ways information is conveyed and how individuals interact. Furthermore, the development of communication devices such as smartphones, laptops, and other technologies has made access to the internet and online communication platforms increasingly easier.

In the process of externalizing transformation, religious guides of Persatuan Islam become more fluid, enabling them to adapt to various social groups and strata of society.

In Ihsan's exposition, it is explained that there are at least two typologies of Persatuan Islam preachers based on their intellectual backgrounds and their attitudes toward ongoing transformation. First is the *fugoha* or traditional group, consisting of religious guides of Persatuan Islam whose scholarly background is strongly rooted in pesantren education. This group typically continues their religious learning through non-formal Islamic study institutions similar to pesantren but with more advanced materials. This group generally tends to reject the transformations taking place. Second are Persatuan Islam preachers with academic backgrounds, who, after completing their pesantren education, continue their studies to undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels. This group is identified as being more moderate, open, and adaptive to transformations in communication. They often act as promoters of transformation both within and outside the Persatuan Islam organization, as many members of this academic group are actively involved in other organizations.

Despite differences of opinion, Alfian views this objective reality as part of organizational dynamics. Overall, he argues that the ongoing transformation process has proceeded quite smoothly. He further explains: “In its development, the transformation of Persis’ da’wah communication has progressed smoothly, keeping pace with contemporary developments. The face of Persis is no longer rigid and stiff; evidence of this is that Persis religious guides can now mingle with other mass organizations and collaborate in various Islamic organizational communication forums in Indonesia.”

Based on Alfian’s explanation, several important points can be identified. First, the transformation of communication among Persatuan Islam preachers has proceeded quite smoothly. Second, communal awareness of the importance of transformation arises from the demands of the times, which require flexibility in delivering da’wah. Third, flexibility has become a hoped-for new identity; whereas previously it was synonymous with rigidity, Persatuan Islam preachers now increasingly choose persuasive approaches in order to remain acceptable to all segments of society.

Internalization, in simple terms, is the learning process through which religious guides of Persatuan Islam move from one point to another—from rigid and offensive communication toward adaptive da’wah communication. In explaining this, Ihsan states that within the Persatuan Islam organization, *pembinaan kejamiyahan* (organizational coaching) is consistently conducted. This is a moment when members and preachers of Persatuan Islam gather to receive enlightenment and advice from central figures or senior leaders. This coaching is part of the organization’s routine activities. According to Ihsan, its objectives include: first, renewing the spirit of togetherness within the organization; second, serving as a medium for developing the competencies of religious guides; and third, functioning as a medium for socializing policies issued by the Central Leadership.

In the context of internalization, the term is understood in a general sense that encompasses two aspects: first, understanding fellow religious guides, and second, understanding transformation as a meaningful aspect of the social reality of Persatuan Islam religious guides. In other words, transformation—whether intentional or not—is a construction of Persatuan Islam religious guides themselves.

Once the stage of internalization is reached, religious guides are considered to have undergone communication transformation.

Theoretically, the process of reaching this stage occurs through socialization or learning. There are at least two types of socialization: first, primary socialization, which is the initial socialization experienced by every religious guide during the period when they learn about open-mindedness and inclusivity in social relations; second, secondary socialization, which consists of subsequent processes encountered by religious guides in the development of the objective world. An example of secondary socialization is how the idea of transforming religious communication grows, such as when a religious guide without direct organizational guidance feels the need to develop adaptive da'wah communication.

At this point, identifying a central figure as a marker and reference for transformation becomes important. The purpose is to trace the intellectual roots of the idea and establish a historical boundary between the "before" and "after" phases. In explaining this, Ihsan highlights the figure of Latief Muchtar, Chairman of Persatuan Islam, as a marker of transformation in the communication of Persatuan Islam religious guides. He further explains:

“Actually, the figure who initiated openness in Persatuan Islam’s da’wah was K.H. Latief Muchtar, which was later developed by K.H. Sidieq Amien. Previously, during the era of K.H.E. Abdurrahman, Persis was known to be quite strict; even becoming a member required an interview process.”

In primary socialization, there is usually no problem of identification because there is no demand to choose a role model. Religious guides accept Latief Muchtar who later became their teacher as he is, almost as a matter of fate, occurring automatically. They internalize Latief Muchtar’s ideas, which are perceived as authoritative and unavoidable realities. Consequently, the ideas of transformation internalized during primary socialization are far more deeply embedded in consciousness than those internalized later during secondary socialization.

Alfan also describes a series of socialization activities related to the intended transformation, which are frequently carried out on various occasions: “Internally, in welcoming this new face, Persis preachers continuously participate in preacher development programs, including training and da’wah courses for all levels of Persis preachers.”

The agendas outlined by Alfan essentially aim to standardize the movement, so that institutionally, religious guides represent the organizational direction in a regular and structured manner.

The transformation of communication among Persatuan Islam religious guides is viewed as an idea or concept, as transformation constitutes a practice or object considered new by society. The transformation of communication among Persatuan Islam preachers may have been occurring for a long time; however, as long as there are individuals—either from within or outside Persatuan Islam—who still regard it as something new, it can still be considered an innovation for them. Diffusion, in this context, refers to the process by which the idea of transformation is conveyed or communicated through certain channels over time among Persatuan Islam preachers.

Drawing on Rogers' analysis, the aim is to explain the process of innovation diffusion through four key points: first, how Persatuan Islam preachers learn about the transformation of da'wah communication; second, how the process of adoption or application of this learning takes place; third, how the socialization of communication transformation is conducted; and fourth, identifying which Persatuan Islam preachers serve as markers of transformation in communication patterns (Rogers, 1983).

The consideration underlying the emergence of communication transformation ideas among Persatuan Islam preachers is the value of relative advantage. Relative advantage refers to the degree to which communication patterns in da'wah activities are perceived as better or superior to previous ones. This can be measured from various aspects, such as effectiveness and the reception of da'wah messages by the audience (*mad'u*). These considerations arise from interactions between Persatuan Islam preachers and social reality, a process also referred to as learning. Two important factors influence Persatuan Islam preachers in generating ideas about transformation: first, transformation emerges due to the demands of the times, which require more flexible communication; second, the transformation of communication considers the aspect of compatibility—namely, the extent to which the transformation is consistent with prevailing values, past experiences, and present needs.

The realization of communication transformation among Persatuan Islam religious guides can be assured by the guides themselves. This transformation is part of the broader process of social change occurring within a societal entity.

As an idea, the transformation of communication among Persatuan Islam religious guides is important for all members to understand. An idea will remain confined to the realm of thought if it is not implemented by all

members. To prevent this, the idea must be understood and implemented by all religious guides and members of Persatuan Islam.

Every change is inseparable from the figures who bring it about. This is also true of the transformation of da'wah communication within the Persatuan Islam organization. Opinion leaders play a significant role, as they are considered capable of influencing others' attitudes informally within the organization. In reality, these figures may serve as initiators of innovation or, conversely, as opponents. They function as models whose decisions whether supportive or resistant are likely to be followed by other Persatuan Islam preachers. Thus, it can be concluded that such figures play an influential role in the process of adaptation and socialization of transformation.

A. Latief Muchtar became one of Persis' leaders when he was elected as First Chairman of the Central Executive Board of Persis at the Congress held on January 16–18, 1981, in Bandung, assisting K.H.E. Abdurrahman as Chairman. Two years later, on Thursday, April 21, 1983, Ustadz Abdurrahman passed away, and the position of Chairman was assumed by A. Latief Muchtar as Acting Chairman following a full meeting of the Central Executive Board of Persis on May 1, 1983, which transferred the position to the First Chairman. Subsequently, at the 10th Congress, A. Latief Muchtar was elected Chairman of the Central Executive Board of Persis. At the 11th Congress held at the Hajj Dormitory in Pondok Gede, Jakarta, A. Latief Muchtar was once again elected Chairman of the Central Executive Board of Persis for the 1995–2000 term.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research conducted, it can be concluded that a transformation of communication has occurred among the mubaligh (religious preachers) of Persatuan Islam. This transformation encompasses the material dimension of da'wah. Previously, the da'wah activities of Persatuan Islam mubaligh were predominantly oriented toward fiqh studies. Over time, however, a transformation in da'wah content has taken place, whereby the materials delivered are increasingly adjusted to contemporary and emerging issues.

Furthermore, transformation has also occurred in the rhetorical dimension. Whereas earlier da'wah approaches tended to be agitational, rigid, and polemical, in the era of globalization—while taking into account openness of thought—Persatuan Islam mubaligh now employ more

adaptive and persuasive communication approaches in their da'wah activities. The factors driving this transformation in da'wah communication patterns include changes in social, cultural, and technological dynamics that continue to evolve. These changes are influenced by rapid technological advancements, the needs of congregations, social dynamics, and contemporary challenges.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study make a significant contribution to the development of da'wah communication and religious communication studies, particularly within the context of Persatuan Islam as a da'wah organization. This research enriches the understanding that da'wah communication is not a static practice, but rather a dynamic and adaptive process shaped by social, cultural, and global transformations.

Findings related to the transformation of da'wah content indicate that the orientation of Persatuan Islam mubaligh has shifted from a dominant focus on fiqh toward more contextual da'wah materials that are responsive to current issues. This provides a theoretical contribution by reinforcing the concept that the construction of da'wah messages is influenced by audience needs and social context, aligning with the diffusion of innovation theory, which emphasizes the adaptation of innovations in order to be accepted within a particular social system.

Transformation in the rhetorical dimension further enriches the study of persuasive communication theory in da'wah. The shift from agitational, rigid, and polemical approaches toward adaptive and persuasive communication reflects a change in the communication strategies employed by mubaligh in building relationships with their audiences (mad'u). This finding expands theoretical understanding by demonstrating that the effectiveness of da'wah is determined not only by the substantive correctness of the message, but also by communication style, rhetorical approach, and dialogical openness employed by religious guides in their da'wah practices.

Accordingly, this study contributes to integrating Everett M. Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory into the study of da'wah communication, particularly in explaining the processes of change and adoption of new communication patterns by Persatuan Islam religious guides as da'wah actors.

From a practical standpoint, the findings of this research have direct implications for the development of da'wah practices within Persatuan



Islam and da'wah organizations more broadly.

First, the results of this study may serve as a strategic reference for Persatuan Islam institutions and leadership in formulating policies and programs for mubaligh development. The transformation toward more contextual da'wah materials highlights the importance of equipping mubaligh with social insight, awareness of contemporary issues, and the ability to identify community needs, ensuring that da'wah remains relevant and solution-oriented.

Second, the findings regarding the transformation of rhetorical approaches toward more adaptive and persuasive communication can serve as practical guidelines for da'wah communication training. Religious guides are encouraged to develop dialogical, empathetic, and inclusive communication skills without abandoning the ideological principles of Persatuan Islam. This is particularly important in responding to increasingly pluralistic and critical societies in the era of globalization.

Third, more broadly, this research may function as a model of adaptive da'wah practice for other da'wah organizations in responding to social change. The transformation undertaken by Persatuan Islam religious guides demonstrates that effective da'wah is one that maintains a balance between steadfast values and flexible communication methods.

Based on the research conducted, several recommendations are considered important. The findings indicate that the transformation of da'wah communication patterns among Persatuan Islam religious guides represents a change that is intentional, conscious, and planned, rather than spontaneous or merely reactive. Therefore, such transformation needs to be managed systematically and sustainably.

It is recommended that the leadership and organizational structure of Persatuan Islam formulate da'wah policies that explicitly accommodate transformations in both da'wah content and communication approaches. Da'wah planning should not focus solely on doctrinal substance, but also on adaptive communication strategies that respond to social dynamics and the demands of changing times.

Capacity building for mubaligh should be strengthened through structured training and continuous mentoring. This guidance is essential to ensure that the transformations that have occurred are understood as part of the organization's da'wah strategy rather than merely individual initiatives. In this way, changes in da'wah communication can remain aligned with the values, vision, and ideology of Persatuan Islam.

Planned transformation should also be supported by mechanisms for periodic evaluation and reflection on da'wah practices. Such evaluation is necessary to assess the effectiveness of da'wah materials and communication approaches, while also ensuring that da'wah transformation maintains a balance between the steadfastness of religious principles and the contextual needs of society.

For future researchers, it is recommended to examine the transformation of Persatuan Islam da'wah from the perspective of organizational policy and change management. Such studies would complement the findings of this research and strengthen understanding of da'wah transformation as a planned, goal-oriented process of change.

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