

Beyond Message Delivery: Embedded Dakwah as Islamic Value Formation and Managerial Reorientation

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ABSTRACT

This article develops the concept of embedded dakwah to explain how Islamic values are formed through everyday community life rather than only through verbal message delivery. Drawing on a narrative integrative review of dakwah studies, lived religion, social learning theory, ritual studies, community leadership, and religion–culture scholarship, the article identifies four domains of embedded dakwah: community leadership, everyday social interaction, collective religious practice, and local culture. It argues that Islamic value formation operates through four interrelated mechanisms: exemplary conduct, habituation, collective participation, and social norm reinforcement. The proposed framework is relational, contextual, and non-deterministic. Its formative effects depend on actor legitimacy, relational quality, power distribution, and community inclusivity. The article contributes to dakwah studies by shifting analytical attention from communication strategy and message transmission toward moral-social formation. It further develops an ecology-based organizational framework for dakwah institutions, covering leadership and governance, program design, the cultural and relational environment, and monitoring, as a practical guide for mosques, pesantren, and Islamic organizations seeking to cultivate Islamic values beyond event-based program delivery.

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INTRODUCTION

Dakwah occupies a central place in Islamic thought and Muslim social life. Broadly understood as the effort to invite human beings toward goodness, truth, and a life oriented to divine values, *dakwah* is not merely a communicative act but part of Islam's broader moral and social mission. Within both Islamic scholarship and Muslim community practice, *dakwah* has long been associated with the transformation of individual conduct, collective morality, and social order (Aziz, 2004; Muhyiddin, 2019). Its scope, therefore, extends beyond formal religious message delivery to include the ways Islamic values are embodied, practiced, and reproduced in everyday life.

Despite this broad meaning, much contemporary *dakwah* scholarship has been shaped by a communication-centered paradigm. *Dakwah* is frequently analyzed in terms of *da'i*, *mad'u*, message, medium, method, strategy, persuasion, audience segmentation, and media effectiveness (Ma'arif, 2010; Rakhmat, 2004). This approach has generated important insights into sermon rhetoric, religious broadcasting, digital *dakwah*, social media engagement, and the circulation of Islamic messages in mediated publics (Nasrullah, 2015; Prasetyo, 2021). However, when *dakwah* is understood primarily as message delivery, the social, relational, ritual, and cultural dimensions of Islamic value formation tend to become analytically marginal.

In many Muslim communities, Islamic values are acquired not only through sermons, lectures, or digital content, but also through observing respected figures, participating in communal practices, engaging in mutual assistance, and inhabiting cultural traditions (Ammerman, 2021; McGuire, 2008). Values such as *amanah*, *ta'awun*, *ukhuwah*, and *musyawarah* are often internalized through repeated participation in social practices rather than through formal explanation alone (Bandura, 1977; Grusec & Davidov, 2010).

Existing concepts such as *dakwah bil-hal*, *uswah hasanah*, cultural *dakwah*, and community empowerment acknowledge that *dakwah* may occur through action, example, and social engagement (Aziz, 2004; Mubarak, 2018). Yet these concepts are often treated normatively rather than developed into an integrated analytical framework. Theoretical traditions such as lived religion, social learning, ritual studies, and religion–culture scholarship offer rich resources for explaining everyday religious formation that have not been systematically integrated into *dakwah* studies (Hefner, 2000; McGuire, 2008).

This article addresses that conceptual gap by developing the concept of embedded *dakwah*. Embedded *dakwah* refers to the process through which Islamic values are formed, reproduced, transformed, and contested within everyday social life through community leadership, everyday interaction, collective religious practice, and local culture. Rather than opposing verbal *dakwah*, this concept complements it by showing that message delivery is only one dimension of a wider ecology of Islamic value formation. *Dakwah* is therefore understood not only as communication, but also as moral-social formation.

The article asks two central questions. First, how can *dakwah* be conceptualized as a socially embedded process of Islamic value formation? Second, through what domains and mechanisms are Islamic values reproduced, internalized, or contested in community life? To answer these questions, the article employs a narrative integrative review that brings *dakwah*

studies into dialogue with lived religion, social learning theory, ritual studies, community leadership, and religion–culture scholarship. This method is appropriate for conceptual framework construction because it allows the synthesis of heterogeneous bodies of literature and the development of new theoretical perspectives across disciplinary boundaries (Jaakkola, 2020; Torraco, 2016).

The argument developed here is that embedded *dakwah* operates through four primary domains: community leadership, everyday social interaction, collective religious practice, and local culture. Across these domains, Islamic value formation occurs through four interrelated mechanisms: exemplary conduct, habituation, collective participation, and social norm reinforcement. However, this process is neither automatic nor uniformly positive. Its formative effects depend on actor legitimacy, relational quality, power distribution, and community inclusivity. Under favorable conditions, embedded *dakwah* may strengthen Islamic character, social cohesion, and religious moderation; under distorted conditions, it may produce formalism, conformity, exclusion, or superficial religiosity (Grusec & Davidov, 2010; Orsi, 2003).

The contribution of this article is fourfold. Theoretically, it shifts *dakwah* studies from a narrow emphasis on message transmission toward an embedded *dakwah* framework of moral-social formation. Conceptually, it clarifies the distinction between domains, mechanisms, outcomes, and conditioning factors in community-based *dakwah*. Practically, it offers an embedded *dakwah* framework for designing *dakwah* practices that are participatory, reflective, culturally sensitive, and attentive to the ambivalent effects of social life. Managerially, it proposes a reorientation of *dakwah* organizational practice from an event-production logic toward an ecology-based stewardship of the social conditions that make Islamic values credible, habitual, and transformative in everyday community life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dakwah beyond Communication and Message Delivery

Dakwah has often been conceptualized as a process of religious communication involving a preacher, an audience, a message, a medium, and a method. This communication-oriented perspective has been useful for explaining how Islamic messages are formulated, transmitted, mediated, and received in different social contexts. It has also enabled *dakwah* studies to engage with questions of rhetoric, persuasion, audience segmentation, digital

media, and religious communication strategy (Ma'arif, 2010; Nasrullah, 2015). Within this paradigm, *dakwah* is primarily treated as an intentional act of message delivery.

However, the Islamic intellectual and practical tradition contains a broader understanding of *dakwah*. *Dakwah* is not limited to verbal proclamation but also includes moral example, social reform, communal responsibility, and the embodiment of Islamic values in daily conduct. Classical and contemporary discussions of *amr bil-ma'ruf wa nahi 'anil munkar*, *dakwah bil-hal*, *uswah hasanah*, cultural *dakwah*, and community empowerment indicate that *dakwah* may operate through action, ethical presence, social service, and cultural engagement, not merely through speech (Aziz, 2004; Muhyiddin, 2019). From a jurisprudential perspective, *dakwah* carries a normative dimension as a communal obligation (*fard kifayah*) whose scope encompasses the moral formation of social life, not merely the transmission of religious messages (Madani, 2017). These concepts suggest that *dakwah* is also a process of shaping social life in accordance with Islamic moral orientations.

The limitation of many communication-centered approaches is not that they are wrong, but that they are analytically incomplete. They explain how messages are delivered but do not adequately explain how values become embodied, habituated, socially reinforced, and culturally meaningful. In community life, Islamic values such as *amanah*, *ta'awun*, *ukhuwah*, *adab*, justice, and *musyawarah* are often learned through lived experience rather than explicit instruction alone. This broader understanding provides the first theoretical foundation for embedded *dakwah*: *dakwah* should be analyzed not only as message transmission, but also as moral-social formation within the social fabric of Muslim communities.

Lived Religion, Social Learning, and Moral Formation

The lived religion perspective explains how religion operates beyond formal doctrine and institutional authority. McGuire (2008) argues that religion as lived in everyday life often differs from official institutional forms; Orsi (2003) emphasizes the concrete ways people encounter religion in daily life; and Ammerman (2021) shows that religion is embedded in social practices, communities, and cultural fields. Applied to *dakwah*, this perspective explains why Islamic value formation cannot be reduced to formal teaching: values are acquired through greeting neighbors, attending funerals, joining communal prayers, and observing how respected figures behave in moments of conflict.

Social learning theory complements the lived religion perspective by explaining how values are learned. Bandura (1977, 1986) argues that human beings acquire behavior,

attitudes, and normative orientations through observation, imitation, and modeling, especially when models are perceived as credible. Moral agency is produced not by instruction alone but through interaction between social models, environmental reinforcement, and personal interpretation (Bandura, 2018).

Moral formation also depends on habituation and socialization. Narváez (2010) argues that moral functioning is shaped by accumulated social experience and habitual dispositions, whereas Grusec and Davidov's (2010) domain-specific approach shows that value internalization depends on the fit between the relational context and the socialization mechanism. These insights explain why repeated communal practices and credible moral models can gradually form Islamic dispositions — but also why modeling may normalize hypocrisy, habituation may produce empty routine, and norm reinforcement may generate conformity rather than genuine internalization.

Ritual, Leadership, and Culture as Social Arenas of Value Formation

Theories of ritual, leadership, and culture identify the social arenas in which embedded *dakwah* operates. Durkheim's analysis of collective ritual shows that shared religious practices generate solidarity and collective identity (Durkheim, 1995), while Collins (2004) argues, through interaction ritual chain theory, that repeated emotionally charged interactions produce shared symbols and moral commitment. In Muslim community life, practices such as congregational prayer, pengajian, and collective dhikr function not only as acts of worship but as arenas of habituation and moral learning.

Leadership is another central arena of value formation. Weber's (1978) typology of authority, traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal, remains useful for understanding why certain actors are followed and trusted. Yet in Muslim communities, authority is often plural, relational, and negotiated through everyday practice. Religious leaders, mosque administrators, neighborhood heads, teachers, parents, and respected elders may all function as moral actors whose conduct shapes communal norms. In the Indonesian Muslim context, studies of religious authority and civil Islam show that Islamic values are often institutionalized through associations, pesantren networks, mosque communities, and civic practices rather than through formal preaching alone (Hefner, 2000; Ropi, 2017).

Culture also serves as an important medium for the formation of Islamic values. Indonesian Muslim life illustrates how values are translated through local symbols and communal practices such as slametan, haul, and communal labor. Madjid (2000) argues that

Islamic values must engage living cultural traditions to remain meaningful, while Azra (2020) links the inclusive character of Indonesian Islam to productive engagement with local culture (see also Fealy & White, 2008; Ropi, 2017). At the same time, ritual, leadership, and culture are not automatically emancipatory or ethically positive. Ritual can generate solidarity, but it can also produce exclusion. Leadership can embody trust, but it can also become patronistic or manipulative. Local culture can mediate Islamic values, but it can also reproduce hierarchy, patriarchy, or social closure. For this reason, embedded *dakwah* requires a non-deterministic framework. Its outcomes depend on whether legitimacy, relational trust, equitable power relations, and inclusivity characterize these arenas.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article is a conceptual study developed through a narrative integrative review. This approach was selected because the study aims to construct a conceptual framework rather than measure empirical effects or conduct a systematic aggregation of findings. Integrative reviews are appropriate for synthesizing diverse theoretical and empirical sources, clarifying concepts, and developing analytical models across disciplinary boundaries (Torraco, 2016; Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). The study also follows the logic of conceptual paper development, where the main contribution lies in theoretical integration and framework construction (Jaakkola, 2020).

Literature was retrieved thematically across six clusters: *dakwah* studies, lived religion, social learning and moral formation, collective ritual and solidarity, community leadership and religious authority, and religion–culture relations. Sources included academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and relevant theoretical works. They were selected based on their conceptual relevance to Islamic value formation, usefulness for explaining the social mechanisms of learning and internalization, relevance to community-based religious practice, and their contribution to the construction of an integrated framework. The review was therefore selective and synthetic rather than exhaustive, consistent with the purpose of narrative and integrative review designs (Snyder, 2019).

The synthesis proceeded in three stages. First, the article identified the limitations of communication-centered approaches in *dakwah* studies. Second, it extracted recurring concepts from the reviewed literature, including modeling, habituation, participation, ritual solidarity, norm reinforcement, moral authority, and cultural mediation. Third, these concepts were organized into a framework distinguishing domains, mechanisms, outcomes,

and conditioning factors. As a conceptual article, the study does not claim to verify causal relationships empirically. Instead, it offers a heuristic model for future empirical research on embedded *dakwah* in diverse Muslim community settings (Jaakkola, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

CONCEPTUALIZING EMBEDDED DAKWAH

Building on these foundations, embedded *dakwah* describes the process through which Islamic values are formed, reproduced, transformed, and contested within everyday social life — through social relations, communal practices, leadership conduct, collective rituals, and local cultural mediation. This concept extends *dakwah* beyond intentional verbal communication by showing how Islamic values become socially meaningful, habitual, and normatively consequential within community life.

Embedded *dakwah* is grounded in the broader Islamic understanding of *dakwah* as a moral and social mission. It builds on existing ideas of *dakwah bil-hal*, *uswah hasanah*, and cultural *dakwah*, while drawing on lived religion, social learning, ritual studies, leadership, and culture to explain how these forms operate in practice (Bandura, 1977; McGuire, 2008).

Embedded *dakwah* is not a replacement for verbal *dakwah* but a complementary framework for understanding the wider ecology in which Islamic values are internalized. Verbal *dakwah* remains important, but messages gain formative power when supported by consistent social practice. A message on amanah becomes credible when community leaders manage resources transparently; a teaching on ukhuwah becomes meaningful when neighbors respond collectively to hardship. The effectiveness of *dakwah* depends not only on message clarity but also on the social environment that either confirms or contradicts it.

Embedded *dakwah* is defined by three criteria: a recognizable Islamic value orientation (practices must embody or transmit values such as *amanah*, *ta'awun*, *'adl*, or *musyawarah*); operation through social mechanisms (values formed through example, habituation, participation, or cultural mediation) rather than normative proclamation alone; and formative significance (shaping moral perception, communal identity, or behavioral disposition). These criteria prevent the concept from becoming too broad while preserving its capacity to capture implicit and nonverbal forms of *dakwah*.

This definition also distinguishes embedded *dakwah* from three adjacent concepts. Verbal *dakwah* refers to explicit communication of Islamic teachings through speech, writing, media, or instruction. *Dakwah bil-hal* emphasizes action-based *dakwah*, in which Islamic values

are demonstrated through conduct, service, and practical example (Aziz, 2004; Mubarak, 2018). Cultural *dakwah* refers to the contextualization of Islamic teachings through local symbols, traditions, and cultural expressions (Azra, 2020; Madjid, 2000). Embedded *dakwah* overlaps with these concepts but is analytically broader: it focuses not only on speech, action, or culture separately, but on the social process through which Islamic values become credible, habitual, and formative within community life.

The analytical advantage of embedded *dakwah* lies in its attention to process. *Dakwah bil-hal* tells us that action matters, but embedded *dakwah* asks how action becomes morally formative. Cultural *dakwah* tells us that local culture matters, but embedded *dakwah* asks how cultural practices mediate, reinforce, or contest Islamic values. Verbal *dakwah* tells us that messages matter, but embedded *dakwah* asks how social relations determine whether those messages become credible and internalized. In this sense, embedded *dakwah* shifts attention from the form of *dakwah* to the mechanism and conditions of Islamic value formation.

Embedded *dakwah* positions *dakwah* along a continuum between explicit religious communication and implicit moral formation. Most community-based *dakwah* occurs between these poles: a *pengajian* combines verbal teaching, collective participation, social bonding, and habituation, while a condolence gathering combines Qur'anic recitation, emotional support, and reinforcement of communal responsibility. Embedded *dakwah* is relational and contextual: Islamic values are mediated through relationships among leaders, teachers, parents, neighbors, and congregants, and its forms vary across *pesantren*, urban neighborhoods, rural villages, mosque networks, and Islamic organizations (Bandura, 1977, 1986; McGuire, 2008).

At the same time, embedded *dakwah* must be conceptualized critically rather than romantically. The fact that a practice occurs within a Muslim community does not automatically make it morally transformative. Ritual participation can foster solidarity but may also lead to formalism or social pressure. Leadership can embody Islamic values but may also normalize patronage, hierarchy, or manipulation. Local culture can mediate Islamic ethics but may also reproduce exclusion, patriarchy, or unequal power relations. Norm reinforcement can cultivate moral responsibility but may also become coercive moral policing. Embedded *dakwah* is therefore non-deterministic: its outcomes depend on social conditions such as legitimacy, relational quality, power distribution, and inclusivity (Grusec & Davidov, 2010; Orsi, 2003).

MECHANISMS OF ISLAMIC VALUE FORMATION

Embedded *dakwah* requires an explanation not only of where Islamic values are formed, but also of how they are formed. In this article, mechanisms refer to the social processes through which Islamic values are learned, embodied, reinforced, or contested within community life. Drawing on social learning theory, moral socialization, lived religion, and ritual studies, this article identifies four interrelated mechanisms: exemplary conduct, habituation, collective participation, and social norm reinforcement. These mechanisms are analytically distinct but frequently overlap in everyday Muslim community practices.

Exemplary Conduct

Exemplary conduct refers to the process through which Islamic values are learned by observing actors whose behavior is perceived as morally credible and socially significant. In *dakwah* discourse, this mechanism resonates with *uswah hasanah*, in which moral example serves as a form of religious invitation. *Dakwah* is therefore not only spoken but demonstrated through conduct, integrity, and consistency between words and actions (Aziz, 2004; Mubarak, 2018). Bandura's social learning theory provides the psychological basis for this process: individuals acquire behavior and normative orientations through observation and modeling, especially when models are perceived as credible, competent, or socially meaningful (Bandura, 1977, 1986).

In embedded *dakwah*, religious teachers, mosque administrators, community leaders, parents, elders, and peers may all function as moral models. A leader who manages collective funds transparently teaches *amanah* more persuasively than repeated verbal exhortation. A teacher who treats students with dignity embodies *adab* and *rahmah*. A neighborhood leader who resolves disputes fairly demonstrates justice and *musyawarah*. However, exemplary conduct depends on perceived legitimacy. Formal status alone does not make an actor morally formative. If a preacher's speech contradicts their behavior, or if a leader speaks about justice while practicing favoritism, the credibility of *dakwah* weakens. Thus, exemplary conduct works when communities perceive consistency between professed Islamic values and actual social behavior (Hefner, 2000; Ropi, 2017).

Habituation

Habituation refers to the process through which Islamic values become internalized through repeated social practice. Unlike one-time instruction, habituation forms moral dispositions by embedding values into routines, rhythms, and recurring communal activities.

In Muslim community life, values such as discipline, care, respect, generosity, patience, and solidarity are often cultivated through repeated practices, including congregational prayer, communal work, study circles, condolence visits, charity distribution, neighborhood deliberation, and everyday mutual assistance.

At a foundational level, Berger and Luckmann (1966) show that any action repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern that can be reproduced with economy of effort, a process of habitualization that precedes institutionalization and underlies the stability of social values. Moral formation theory supports this mechanism: values become durable when individuals repeatedly encounter and enact them in socially meaningful settings (Grusec & Davidov, 2010; Narváez, 2010). A community practicing gotong royong may cultivate ta'awun through embodied participation; a mosque consistently involving members in deliberation may habituate musyawarah as normal collective decision-making. Yet habituation is ambivalent: repetition may become mere routine without reflective moral commitment.

Collective Participation

Collective participation refers to the formation of Islamic values through active involvement in shared religious and social practices. While exemplary conduct emphasizes observation and habituation emphasizes repetition, collective participation emphasizes direct experience. Participants learn values by doing, feeling, and belonging within a community. Durkheim's theory of collective ritual shows that shared practices generate solidarity, moral energy, and collective identity (Durkheim, 1995). Collins (2004) further argues that repeated co-present interaction, shared attention, emotional energy, and common symbols reinforce group bonds and moral commitment.

Collective practices such as congregational prayer, pengajian, yasinan, haul, and communal charity foster a sense of shared belonging and moral responsibility. A person joining collective assistance for a bereaved family not only hears about compassion, but they also participate in it. However, collective participation may also produce conformity pressure or performative religiosity when driven by fear of judgment (Ammerman, 2021; McGuire, 2008). Empirical research shows that collective forms of religious socialization in adolescence are significantly linked to moral foundations and values in young adulthood, outweighing the influence of sociodemographic factors (Smith, 2023).

Social Norm Reinforcement

Social norm reinforcement refers to the process by which communities sustain Islamic values through approval, correction, recognition, expectations, and sanctions. Values become socially powerful when they are not only taught or practiced individually, but also recognized as shared standards of communal life. Through everyday interaction, communities communicate what is honorable, shameful, expected, praised, discouraged, or corrected. This mechanism is closely related to moral socialization. Grusec and Davidov (2010) show that norms are more likely to be internalized when corrections occur within relationships characterized by trust, care, reciprocity, and respect. Conversely, norms imposed through domination, humiliation, or coercion may produce compliance without genuine moral commitment.

In embedded *dakwah*, norm reinforcement occurs through ordinary and institutional practices: praising honesty in resource management, recognizing generosity, correcting unfair behavior, and discouraging social neglect. However, norm reinforcement can become moral policing when correction is detached from compassion, produce exclusion when dominant groups marginalize minorities, or generate performative religiosity in which people display compliance while privately resisting (Grusec & Davidov, 2010; Orsi, 2003).

DOMAINS OF EMBEDDED DAKWAH

Community Leadership

Community leadership is a central domain of embedded *dakwah*. Religious leaders, mosque administrators, pesantren leaders, neighborhood heads, teachers, and respected elders serve as moral references whose conduct shapes how Islamic values are interpreted and practiced in daily life. Leadership in embedded *dakwah* cannot be explained solely by formal authority. Leaders are followed because they are perceived as trustworthy, consistent, knowledgeable, and socially responsible. In the Indonesian Muslim context, religious authority is plural and embedded in pesantren, mosques, neighborhood associations, and civic institutions (Hefner, 2000; Ropi, 2017). Religious authority in contemporary Indonesian Islam is expressed through diverse leadership forms and sustained through ongoing processes of community cultivation within Muslim communities (Alatas, 2021; Howell, 2008).

In embedded *dakwah*, leadership becomes formative when it translates Islamic values into visible public practice. A mosque administrator who manages donations transparently

embodies *amanah*. A *kyai* who resolves conflict with fairness embodies *'adl* and *rahmah*. A neighborhood leader who involves residents in deliberation embodies *musyawarah*. However, leadership can also undermine *dakwah* when authority becomes patronistic, manipulative, exclusionary, or ethically inconsistent. Thus, the formative capacity of leadership depends not merely on formal authority but on the extent to which leaders are perceived as morally legitimate and consistent in practice.

Everyday Social Interaction

Everyday social interaction is perhaps the most pervasive domain of embedded *dakwah*. It includes ordinary encounters among families, neighbors, peers, mosque congregants, teachers, students, traders, workers, and community members. These interactions are often not labeled as religious instruction, yet they are powerful sites of moral formation. Religion operates not only in formal institutions but also in ordinary practices, relationships, routines, and everyday decisions (Ammerman, 2021; McGuire, 2008). In Muslim communities, Islamic values are enacted through greetings, visiting the sick, attending funerals, sharing food, resolving conflicts, and maintaining neighborhood ties.

Everyday interaction forms values through habituation and reciprocity. A child who repeatedly sees adults helping neighbors learns *ta'awun* as a normal social practice. A resident who participates in collective condolence practices learns that grief is a communal responsibility. A community that resolves disputes through dialogue habituates members into *musyawarah*. However, everyday interaction is also an arena of tension. Social relations can cultivate trust, solidarity, and care, but they can also reproduce exclusion, gossip, domination, class hierarchy, gender inequality, or generational conflict. Therefore, embedded *dakwah* in everyday interaction must be assessed not only by the presence of Islamic symbols or practices, but by the quality of relationships they generate.

Collective Religious Practice

Collective religious practice constitutes another major domain of embedded *dakwah*, including congregational prayer, *pengajian*, Qur'anic recitation groups, *yasinan*, *tahlilan*, *haul*, and *dhikr* gatherings. These practices function not only as devotional activities but as social arenas where Islamic values are embodied and reinforced. Collective religious practices create spaces where bodies, emotions, and social expectations are coordinated, generating solidarity and moral commitment (Collins, 2004; Durkheim, 1995). Participants not only hear about Islamic values; they also experience belonging, discipline, and shared responsibility.

The formative role of collective religious practice lies in its capacity to combine multiple mechanisms. It involves habituation through repeated participation, collective participation through shared involvement, norm reinforcement through communal expectations, and often exemplary conduct through the presence of respected religious figures. A weekly *pengajian*, for example, may combine religious teaching, social bonding, charitable coordination, and communal identity formation. Yet collective religious practice should not be assumed to automatically produce value internalization. Participation may become habitual without reflection, socially pressured without sincerity, or symbolically intense without ethical transformation. The analytical task is therefore to distinguish between participation as attendance and participation as formative engagement.

Local Culture

Local culture is a crucial domain because Islamic values are always mediated through particular social histories, symbols, and communal traditions. In the Indonesian Muslim context, practices such as slametan, haul, sedekah bumi, food sharing, and village gatherings serve as cultural forms through which Islamic values are expressed and negotiated. Islamic life in Indonesia has historically developed through interaction with local traditions rather than cultural replacement. Madjid (2000) argues Islamic values must engage living traditions to remain transformative; Azra (2020) links Indonesia's inclusive Islam to productive engagement with local culture; and Fealy and White (2008) document plurality across piety, politics, and everyday practice.

Local culture functions as embedded *dakwah* when it translates Islamic values into familiar communal forms. A food-sharing tradition may embody generosity and social care; a village ritual may reinforce gratitude, remembrance, and collective responsibility; and a local gathering may become a space for solidarity, conflict mediation, and moral instruction. However, local culture also requires critical engagement. Not every inherited practice is ethically compatible with Islamic values. Some traditions may reproduce hierarchy, patriarchy, exclusion, superstition, or unequal access to communal authority. Embedded *dakwah* must therefore distinguish between cultural mediation that deepens Islamic ethics and cultural reproduction that normalizes injustice.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND BOUNDARY CONDITIONS

A Conceptual Model of Embedded *Dakwah*

Embedded *dakwah* involves five interrelated components: actors (religious leaders, mosque administrators, teachers, parents, peers, and community members who model, mediate, or reinforce Islamic values); domains (community leadership, everyday social interaction, collective religious practice, and local culture); mechanisms (exemplary conduct, habituation, collective participation, and social norm reinforcement); outcomes (strengthened Islamic character, social cohesion, and religious moderation); and boundary conditions (actor legitimacy, relational quality, power distribution, and community inclusivity) shaping whether outcomes are formative or distorted.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model of embedded *dakwah*. It should be read as a dynamic model: legitimate leadership may strengthen participation, participation deepens trust, trust reinforces social norms, and reinforced norms may further enhance leadership legitimacy. Conversely, illegitimate leadership may weaken participation, reduce trust, and turn norm reinforcement into coercive control.

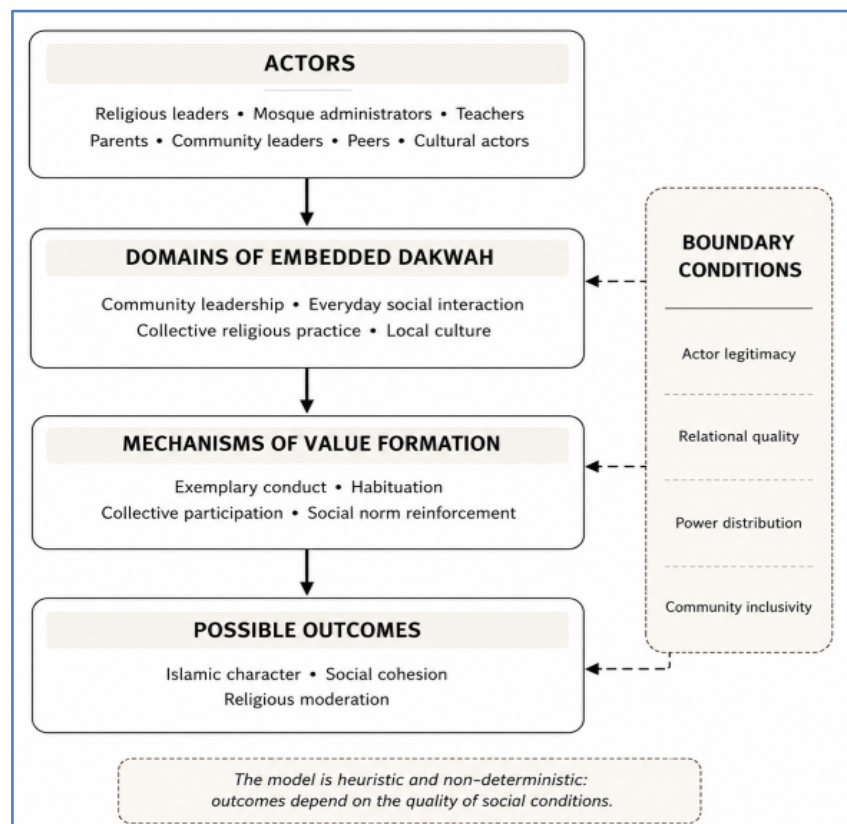


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Embedded *Dakwah*

Boundary Conditions of Embedded *Dakwah*

The first boundary condition is actor legitimacy. Embedded *dakwah* depends on whether actors who model and mediate Islamic values are perceived as credible, trustworthy, and morally consistent, such that formal authority alone is insufficient (Bandura, 1977; Hefner, 2000). The second is relational quality: values are more likely to be internalized within relationships marked by trust, reciprocity, care, and psychological safety. Correction and norm reinforcement are more formative when they occur within caring and reciprocal relationships than in contexts of fear or domination (Grusec & Davidov, 2010).

The third boundary condition is power distribution. Embedded *dakwah* always operates within relations of authority and social influence; power can support moral formation when exercised accountably, but distorts *dakwah* when it becomes coercive, patronistic, or exclusionary. The fourth is community inclusivity: embedded *dakwah* becomes more ethically transformative when practices allow meaningful participation across gender, age, class, and social position ensuring that cultural mediation remains ethically reflective rather than reproducing social closure (Fealy & White, 2008; Madjid, 2000).

These four boundary conditions explain why embedded *dakwah* is contingent: outcomes depend not only on the presence of Islamic symbols, rituals, or leaders, but on the quality of the social conditions in which they operate. A community with frequent religious activities may not produce a deep Islamic character if its relations are coercive or its leadership lacks integrity. Conversely, ordinary practices of fairness, care, and accountability carry significant *dakwah* value even when not formally labeled as preaching.

Ambivalent Outcomes: Formation, Formalism, and Exclusion

A major advantage of the embedded *dakwah* framework is that it avoids both reductionism and romanticism. Under favorable conditions, it may strengthen Islamic character, social cohesion, and religious moderation — exemplary conduct makes values visible; habituation makes them durable; collective participation makes them experiential; and norm reinforcement makes them socially consequential.

Under unfavorable conditions, however, the same mechanisms produce distorted outcomes. Exemplary conduct becomes negative modeling when leaders normalize hypocrisy; habituation becomes formalism when practices lose reflective meaning; collective participation becomes conformity pressure; and norm reinforcement becomes moral policing. This distinction allows scholars to evaluate not only whether religious activities exist, but what kinds of moral and social effects they generate. Empirical evidence from

Indonesia further illustrates how religious inconsistency among leaders undermines the moral credibility of *dakwah* and weakens communal trust (Khoirin & Junaedi, 2022). Table 1 summarizes the relationship between domains, mechanisms, outcomes, and risks.

Table 1. Domains, Mechanisms, Outcomes, and Risks of Embedded *Dakwah*

Domain	Main Actors	Dominant Mechanisms	Possible Outcomes	Risks
Community leadership	Kyais, ustaz, mosque administrators, neighborhood leaders, teachers	Exemplary conduct; norm reinforcement	Amanah, justice, trust, participatory governance	Patronage, favoritism, manipulation, moral disillusionment
Everyday social interaction	Families, neighbors, peers, community members	Habituation; reciprocity; informal norm reinforcement	Ta'awun, empathy, care, social responsibility	Gossip, exclusion, conformity, social pressure
Collective religious practice	Congregations, pengajian groups, ritual communities, mosque networks, Congregations, pengajian groups, ritual communities, mosque networks	Collective participation; habituation; ritual solidarity	Belonging, solidarity, religious identity and moral discipline	Formalism, performative religiosity, insider-outsider boundaries
Local culture	Cultural leaders, elders, local communities, religious-cultural mediators	Cultural mediation; norm reinforcement; participation	Contextual religiosity, moderation and communal solidarity	Hierarchy, patriarchy, cultural romanticism, exclusion

This table reinforces the non-deterministic nature of embedded *dakwah*. Each domain contains both formative potential and ethical risk. The task of *dakwah* studies is therefore not merely to identify religious activities, but to analyze the social mechanisms and boundary conditions that shape their outcomes.

THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical Implications

The proposed framework of embedded *dakwah* contributes to *dakwah* studies in three theoretical directions. First, it expands the analytical scope of *dakwah* studies by shifting attention from communication strategy and message transmission toward moral-social formation. This shift does not reject communication-centered approaches, but situates sermons, lectures, media, and digital outreach within a wider ecology of social relations, communal practices, leadership conduct, collective rituals, and cultural mediation. In this sense, embedded *dakwah* clarifies the relationship between verbal *dakwah*, *dakwah bil-hal*,

cultural *dakwah*, and everyday religious formation, thereby positioning them not as competing paradigms but as complementary dimensions of a single formative ecology.

Second, it offers a mechanism-based vocabulary: by identifying exemplary conduct, habituation, collective participation, and social norm reinforcement as distinct yet interrelated mechanisms, the framework explains how Islamic values move from abstract teachings into embodied dispositions and communal expectations, opening productive dialogue with social learning theory, ritual studies, and moral socialization.

Third, the model introduces a non-deterministic and critically reflexive orientation: its emphasis on actor legitimacy, relational quality, power distribution, and inclusivity prevents the assumption that all religiously embedded practices produce positive outcomes, aligning *dakwah* studies with scholarship on lived religion, moral sociology, and the ambivalent effects of community-based value formation.

For researchers, the framework provides a basis for empirical inquiry in pesantren, mosques, urban neighborhoods, Islamic organizations, and diaspora settings through ethnographic, comparative, survey-based, or mixed-methods designs.

Implications For *Dakwah* Management

The embedded *dakwah* framework shifts the managerial question of *dakwah*. Rather than asking only, “How do we deliver the message effectively?”, embedded *dakwah* management asks, “What social conditions make Islamic values livable in everyday community life?” This reframing leads to several practical implications.

First, *dakwah* management should move from event-based to ecology-based planning. Effective *dakwah* must extend beyond scheduled programs to deliberate attention to the social conditions that sustain value formation. A community teaching amanah while tolerating opaque financial management, or promoting ukhuwah while excluding certain groups, weakens its own *dakwah* credibility. Second, leadership development should be treated as a strategic priority. The moral credibility of community actors is not merely a personal matter but a managerial concern. Institutions should therefore invest in integrity, relational competence, and consistency—not only rhetorical skills—through mentoring structures and accountability practices (Bandura, 1977; Hefner, 2000).

Third, *dakwah* programs should be designed through participatory and inclusive governance. Women, youth, and marginalized groups should be involved in needs assessment, program design, and evaluation so that *musyawarah*, *ukhuwah*, and *‘adl* are

embedded not only in *dakwah* messages but also in *dakwah* governance itself. Fourth, *dakwah* management requires reflective engagement with local culture. Local traditions should not be treated merely as obstacles or as neutral vehicles for messaging. Instead, *dakwah* managers should identify cultural practices that genuinely mediate Islamic values while critically evaluating practices that reproduce hierarchy or gender inequality (Azra, 2020; Madjid, 2000).

Fifth, evaluation should move beyond attendance metrics. Rather than measuring only reach, frequency, and audience size, embedded *dakwah* calls for richer criteria, including the quality of relational environments, perceived moral credibility of leaders, meaningful participation, behavioral change, and communal solidarity (Jaakkola, 2020; Snyder, 2019). Sixth, *dakwah* institutions should prevent and address distorted outcomes. Reflective feedback mechanisms and accountability structures are needed to identify and correct formalism, moral policing, and conformity pressure, while enabling leaders and members to raise concerns about *dakwah* integrity without fear of social sanction (Grusec & Davidov, 2010; Orsi, 2003).

In sum, embedded *dakwah* reframes *dakwah* management as the stewardship of a moral-social ecology. Its central task is not only to organize communication but to cultivate the social conditions under which Islamic values become credible, habitual, and transformative in the everyday life of Muslim communities.

Toward Ecology-Based *Dakwah* Organizational Framework

Building on this reorientation, embedded *dakwah* can be translated into an organizational framework for *dakwah* institutions, mosques, pesantren, Islamic organizations, and community associations (Usman, 2020). Rather than treating *dakwah* practice primarily as the management of messages, events, or audiences, this organizational framework situates *dakwah* within the moral-social ecology of everyday community life. It therefore directs institutional attention to four interrelated dimensions: leadership and governance, program and community design, cultural and relational environment, and monitoring and institutional learning. These dimensions correspond to the mechanisms and boundary conditions identified in this article and provide a practical basis for rethinking how Islamic values are cultivated, sustained, and evaluated within community settings.

Table 2 presents the organizational framework operationally, specifying organizational focus, key practices, and indicators of formative quality for each dimension.

Table 2. An Ecology-Based Framework for *Dakwah* Organizational Practice

Organizational Dimension	Organizational Focus	Key Practices	Indicators of Formative Capacity
Leadership & Governance	Moral credibility and accountability of organizational actors	Mentoring and character development for leaders; transparent financial management; participatory decision-making; accountability mechanisms	Perceived integrity of leaders; consistency between values taught and conduct demonstrated; level of community trust
Program & Community Design	Participatory and inclusive design of <i>dakwah</i> activities	Needs assessment involving women, youth, and marginalized groups; co-design of programs; integration of habituation into communal routines	Breadth of participation; degree of meaningful involvement across gender, age, and social position
Cultural & Relational Environment	Quality of social relations and cultural mediation	Cultivation of trust-based relationships among members; reflective engagement with local traditions; encouragement of mutual assistance and communal solidarity	Quality of relational trust; cultural practices that reinforce Islamic values; reduction of exclusionary norms, Quality of relational trust; cultural practices that reinforce Islamic values; reduction of exclusionary norms
Monitoring & Institutional Learning	Evaluation beyond attendance metrics and feedback mechanisms	Ethnographic or reflective assessment of value internalization; regular community dialogue; identification and correction of distorted outcomes	Evidence of behavioral change, social trust indicators and openness of institutional culture to critical feedback

This organizational framework does not replace existing *dakwah* management functions, program planning, financial stewardship, and organizational communication, but reorients their purpose: these functions are evaluated not only by operational efficiency, but by their contribution to social conditions that make Islamic values credible and formative. A mosque that plans programs efficiently, but whose leadership lacks moral credibility, or whose activities exclude women and youth, has not yet fulfilled the managerial demands of embedded *dakwah*. The ecology-based *dakwah* management also reframes *dakwah* human resource development: recruiting and developing preachers, instructors, facilitators, and administrators should include attention to moral formation, relational competence, and cultural sensitivity—not only to technical or rhetorical skills.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article has developed the concept of embedded *dakwah* to explain *dakwah* as a socially embedded process of Islamic value formation, rather than merely as verbal message delivery. Drawing on *dakwah* studies, lived religion, social learning theory, ritual studies,

community leadership, and religion–culture scholarship, it argues that Islamic values are formed, reproduced, transformed, and contested through leadership conduct, everyday social relations, collective religious practices, and local cultural mediation.

The article contributes to *dakwah* studies by shifting attention from message transmission to moral-social formation. It identifies four mechanisms of embedded *dakwah*, namely exemplary conduct, habituation, collective participation, and social norm reinforcement. It also identifies four boundary conditions, namely actor legitimacy, relational quality, power distribution, and community inclusivity, which shape whether embedded *dakwah* produces formative or distorted outcomes. Managerially, the framework suggests that *dakwah* institutions should be assessed not only by program delivery, audience reach, or communication efficiency, but also by their capacity to cultivate social conditions that make Islamic values credible, habitual, and transformative in everyday community life.

A central implication is that embedded *dakwah* is non-deterministic. Islamic symbols, rituals, leaders, and traditions do not automatically generate moral transformation. Under favorable conditions, they may strengthen Islamic character, social cohesion, and religious moderation. Under unfavorable conditions, they may produce formalism, conformity, exclusion, moral policing, or performative religiosity. Future research should empirically examine this framework through ethnographic, comparative, survey-based, or mixed-methods studies, particularly by developing indicators for actor legitimacy, relational quality, participatory intensity, norm reinforcement, inclusivity, and perceived value internalization.

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