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Hadith-Based Ethics of Da'wah: Principles and Contemporary Relevance

Mhd Ary Hamzah[1], Munandar[1], Farid Adnir[1]

[1] Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Studies on da'wah ethics have generally focused on normative Islamic teachings or contemporary communication practices, yet limited attention has been given to systematically examining the ethical principles of da'wah through a thematic analysis of Hadith and their relevance to the challenges of modern society. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the ethics of da'wah from the perspective of the Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad SAW and contextualizing their application in contemporary social settings. Employing a library research approach and the thematic (maudhu'i) method of Hadith analysis, the study identifies key ethical principles, including hikmah (wisdom), mau'izhah hasanah (good counsel), mujadalah bi al-lati hiya ahsan (courteous dialogue), exemplary conduct (uswah hasanah), non-coercion, and patience. These principles collectively represent a humanistic, persuasive, and socially constructive model of da'wah. The study further demonstrates that a contextual understanding of Hadith is essential for adapting these ethical values to contemporary realities, particularly in responding to pluralism, digital communication, and globalization. The originality of this research lies in its integration of thematic Hadith analysis with contemporary social issues to formulate a Hadith-based framework of adaptive and moderate da'wah ethics. The findings contribute to the development of ethical da'wah models that promote peaceful communication, strengthen social cohesion, and reduce the potential for social conflict in diverse societies.

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Corresponding Author:
Mhd Ary Hamzah
Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia; hamzah3006243002@uinsu.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Da'wah constitutes a fundamental dimension of Islamic teachings aimed at guiding humanity toward goodness, truth, and moral excellence. As a process of communicating religious values, da'wah is not solely concerned with the substance of the message but also with the ethical principles governing its delivery (Altruis & Ansori, 2025). The effectiveness of da'wah is significantly influenced by the

methods, approaches, and attitudes adopted by the da'i when engaging with diverse audiences (Khoirurroji'in, 2019). Da'wah that neglects ethical considerations may generate resistance, misunderstanding, or even rejection, regardless of the validity of the message being conveyed. Consequently, ethics occupies a central position in ensuring that da'wah fulfills its objectives of fostering guidance, social harmony, and spiritual development (Tanjung & Abdullah, 2025).

The ethical foundation of da'wah is deeply rooted in the teachings and practices of Prophet Muhammad SAW. As the recipient and transmitter of divine revelation, the Prophet exemplified a model of da'wah characterized by wisdom (*hikmah*), patience, compassion, gentleness, and respect for human dignity (Mauludin & Khadijah, 2025). Numerous Hadiths portray how the Prophet adapted his communication to the circumstances of his audience, emphasized ease rather than hardship, and encouraged persuasion rather than coercion. These teachings demonstrate that da'wah in Islam is fundamentally humanistic and attentive to the psychological, social, and cultural conditions of the *mad'u* (Mokodenseho et al., 2024). Accordingly, Hadith serves not only as a normative source of Islamic teachings but also as a practical and methodological guide for ethical communication and social interaction.

The relevance of Hadith-based da'wah ethics has become increasingly significant in contemporary society. The rapid development of digital communication technologies has transformed the landscape of da'wah, enabling religious messages to reach wider audiences through social media and online platforms. While these developments provide new opportunities for religious outreach, they also present serious ethical challenges (Hendra & Hartati, 2019). The emergence of hate speech, religious intolerance, provocative rhetoric, misinformation, and polarizing discourse in some forms of digital da'wah reflects a growing disconnect between the ethical values promoted in the Prophetic tradition and the realities of contemporary communication practices (Atiah et al., 2025). In pluralistic societies, where individuals from diverse religious, cultural, and ideological backgrounds interact intensively, ethical approaches to da'wah are essential for promoting mutual understanding, peaceful coexistence, and social cohesion (Nurhalimah et al., 2025).

Previous studies have examined various aspects of da'wah ethics, Islamic communication, and the role of morality in religious preaching. Some studies have emphasized normative Islamic principles of da'wah, while others have explored the challenges of da'wah in digital environments or analyzed communication strategies from contemporary perspectives. However, most existing studies tend to focus either on general Qur'anic principles, contemporary communication theories, or practical challenges of modern da'wah without providing a systematic thematic analysis of the Hadiths that specifically address da'wah ethics (Fitri & Muttaqin, 2025). Furthermore, limited attention has been devoted to examining how these Hadith-based ethical principles can be contextualized and applied to contemporary issues such as digital communication, religious pluralism, and globalization. This limitation reveals an important research gap concerning the integration of classical Hadith teachings with contemporary social realities.

This study seeks to address that gap by conducting a thematic (*maudhu'i*) analysis of the Hadiths related to da'wah ethics and by examining their relevance within the context of modern society. The novelty of this research lies in its effort to integrate a systematic Hadith-based ethical framework with contemporary challenges of communication and social interaction. Unlike previous studies that predominantly discuss da'wah ethics in a normative or descriptive manner, this study develops a contextual understanding of Prophetic teachings and demonstrates their applicability to present-day da'wah practices. In doing so, the study contributes to the development of a more adaptive, moderate, and socially constructive model of da'wah rooted in authentic Islamic sources.

Based on this background, this study seeks to answer the following questions: What are the principal ethical values of da'wah contained in the Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad SAW? How can these ethical principles be understood through a thematic analysis of Hadith? To what extent are the ethical teachings of the Hadith relevant to addressing the challenges of da'wah in contemporary society, particularly in the contexts of digital communication, pluralism, and globalization? By addressing these

questions, the study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the discourse on Islamic da'wah by providing a comprehensive ethical framework that promotes peaceful communication, prevents social conflict, and reflects the universal values of Islam as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design using a library research approach. Library research is appropriate for examining concepts, values, and ethical principles embedded in Islamic textual sources, particularly the Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad SAW. The study relies on both primary and secondary sources (Sari & Asmendri, 2020). The primary data consist of Hadith narrations contained in authoritative Hadith compilations, including Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī, Sunan al-Nasā'ī, and Sunan Ibn Mājah, as well as classical and contemporary commentaries (sharḥ al-ḥadīth). Secondary data include scholarly books, journal articles, dissertations, and other academic publications discussing da'wah ethics, Islamic communication, and contemporary interpretations of Hadith (Umar & Tasrim, 2025).

The selection of Hadiths was conducted using specific inclusion criteria to ensure the relevance and validity of the data. First, the Hadiths had to contain explicit or implicit teachings related to the ethics, methods, attitudes, or communication strategies of da'wah. Second, priority was given to narrations classified as ṣaḥīḥ (authentic) or ḥasan (good) according to recognized Hadith scholars. Third, the selected Hadiths had to possess thematic relevance to contemporary issues of communication, social interaction, and religious outreach. Hadiths with repetitive content were consolidated to avoid redundancy, while narrations with similar meanings but different textual formulations were analyzed comparatively to enrich thematic interpretation.

Data collection was conducted through systematic document analysis. Relevant Hadiths and supporting literature were identified, collected, and organized according to thematic categories. The collected texts were subsequently coded using a thematic coding scheme developed from recurring ethical concepts found in the Hadith literature. The coding categories consisted of: (1) hikmah (wisdom in communication), (2) mau'izhah hasanah (good counsel and persuasive guidance), (3) mujādalah bi al-latī hiya aḥsan (constructive and respectful dialogue), (4) uswah hasanah (exemplary conduct), (5) non-coercion in religious communication, (6) patience and emotional restraint, and (7) social sensitivity and empathy toward the audience (mad'u). These codes served as analytical units for identifying patterns and ethical principles across the selected Hadiths.

The study applies the thematic (maudhu'i) method of Hadith analysis. The analytical process was conducted in several stages. First, relevant Hadiths concerning da'wah ethics were identified and compiled from primary sources. Second, the selected narrations were classified according to thematic similarities and coded based on the predetermined analytical categories. Third, each thematic group was examined through textual analysis to identify its ethical meanings and normative implications. Fourth, contextual interpretation was undertaken by considering the historical circumstances (asbāb al-wurūd), social context, and communicative dimensions of the Hadiths. Fifth, the themes were synthesized to construct a comprehensive framework of da'wah ethics derived from the Prophetic tradition. Finally, the findings were contextualized within contemporary social realities, particularly issues related to digital communication, pluralism, and globalization.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed data triangulation and source validation strategies. Triangulation was conducted by comparing information across multiple Hadith collections, classical commentaries, and contemporary academic studies. Interpretations derived from the Hadith texts were cross-checked with authoritative scholarly works in the fields of Hadith studies, Islamic communication, and da'wah studies. In addition, theoretical triangulation was applied by relating the ethical principles identified in the Hadiths to contemporary communication and social interaction theories. This validation process was intended to ensure consistency, reduce interpretive bias, and strengthen the contextual relevance of the findings.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Theoretical Foundation and Conceptual Framework of Da'wah Ethics in Hadith

The ethics of da'wah from the perspective of Hadith constitute a normative foundation that regulates how Islamic teachings should be conveyed appropriately, wisely, and in a manner oriented toward public benefit (maslahah) (U. Hasanah, 2021). In the teachings brought by Prophet Muhammad SAW, da'wah is not merely understood as the activity of delivering religious messages but also as a process of moral transformation that requires integrity, gentleness, and social sensitivity from the da'i (Badruzzaman & Ermanto, 2025). Consequently, the effectiveness of da'wah is determined not only by the substance of the message but also by the ethical manner in which it is communicated. One of the primary principles of da'wah ethics is facilitation (taysīr) and the avoidance of hardship (ta'sīr). This principle is emphasized in the Hadith:

"Make things *easy and do not make them difficult; give glad tidings and do not drive people away."*

This Hadith indicates that da'wah should consider the psychological, social, and cultural conditions of the mad'u (audience of da'wah). A rigid and burdensome approach may create resistance, whereas an accommodating and persuasive approach encourages acceptance and engagement. Another fundamental principle is gentleness (rifq). The Prophet Muhammad SAW said:

"Indeed, Allah is Gentle and loves gentleness in all matters."

This Hadith demonstrates that gentleness is not merely a communication technique but a theological value rooted in divine attributes. Therefore, ethical da'wah should reflect compassion, empathy, and respect for human dignity. Furthermore, morality (akhlaq) forms the core of da'wah ethics. The Prophet stated:

"Indeed, *I was sent to perfect noble character."*

This Hadith underscores that da'wah is essentially a moral mission. A da'i is therefore required not only to convey Islamic teachings but also to embody them through exemplary conduct. The credibility of da'wah depends largely on the consistency between message and behavior. In the context of communication ethics, Islam also emphasizes the principle of non-harm (la darar). The Prophet said:

"A Muslim *is one from whose tongue and hands others are safe."*

This Hadith highlights that da'wah must avoid verbal aggression, insults, hate speech, and any form of communication that harms others. Respectful and constructive communication is therefore an indispensable component of Islamic preaching. Building upon these Hadiths, a conceptual framework of da'wah ethics can be synthesized into five interconnected dimensions: facilitation (taysīr), gentleness (rifq), noble character (akhlaq), patience (sabr), and non-harmful communication (adam al-idha') (Nan et al., 2024). Facilitation functions as the pedagogical dimension that makes religious teachings accessible; gentleness serves as the relational dimension that fosters empathy and trust; noble character represents the moral dimension that ensures credibility; patience provides emotional resilience in facing rejection or diversity of opinions; and non-harmful communication constitutes the social dimension that safeguards harmony and mutual respect (Palawa et al., 2025). Together, these dimensions form an integrated framework of ethical da'wah aimed at achieving maslahah and realizing Islam as rahmatan lil 'alamin.

This synthesis is also consistent with the views of classical and contemporary Muslim scholars. Imam al-Nawawi emphasized gentleness and patience as essential elements of successful da'wah, while Yusuf al-Qaradawi argued that Islamic preaching should be grounded in wisdom (hikmah), good counsel (mau'izhah hasanah), and constructive dialogue. These scholarly perspectives reinforce the notion that ethical da'wah is not merely a set of individual virtues but a holistic framework guiding the interaction between the da'i, the message, and the audience. Accordingly, the conceptual framework of da'wah ethics derived from Hadith positions ethics as the central mechanism linking Islamic teachings with social reality (R. Hidayat et al., 2023). In contemporary digital and multicultural contexts, these principles remain highly relevant for promoting inclusive, humanistic, and dialogical forms of da'wah capable of fostering social cohesion and religious moderation.

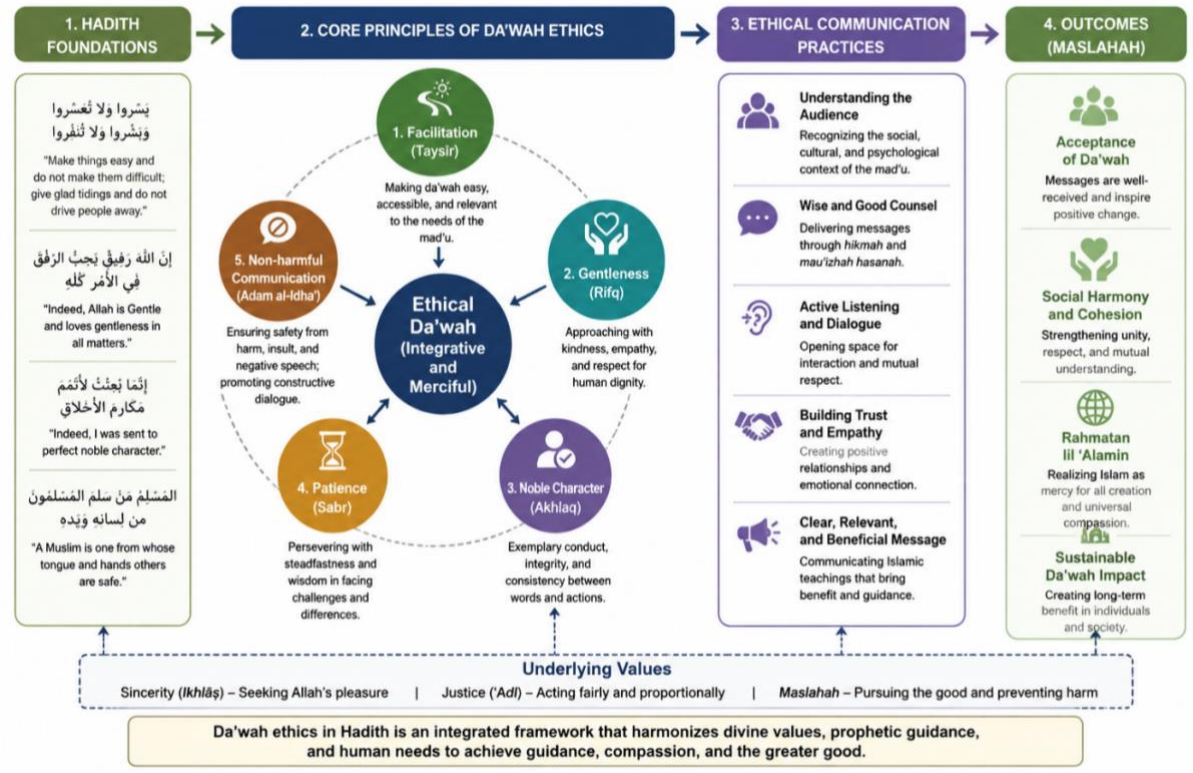


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Da'wah Ethics in Hadith

Principles of Da'wah Ethics in Hadith

1. The Principle of Hikmah (Wisdom)

The principle of hikmah (wisdom) constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of Islamic da'wah ethics. In the Islamic tradition, hikmah extends beyond intellectual intelligence and encompasses the ability to understand circumstances, assess the psychological condition of the mad'u (audience), and select communication methods that are appropriate to specific contexts. Da'wah, therefore, is not merely the transmission of religious messages but a dialogical and transformative process that requires social sensitivity, communicative competence, and ethical judgment. Through hikmah, a da'i is expected to communicate Islamic teachings in ways that are relevant, understandable, and beneficial to the audience (Khoirurroji'in, 2019). The normative foundation of hikmah can be found in the teachings and practices of Prophet Muhammad SAW. One Hadith emphasizes the importance of tailoring communication to the audience's level of understanding:

أُمِرْنَا أَنْ نُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ عَلَى قَدْرِ عُقُولِهِمْ

"We have *been commanded to speak to people according to the level of their understanding."*

This Hadith demonstrates that effective da'wah requires sensitivity to the intellectual, educational, and cultural backgrounds of the audience. The message should be delivered in a manner that is comprehensible and meaningful to the mad'u. Failure to consider these differences may result in misunderstanding, resistance, or rejection of the message. From the perspective of communication theory, this Prophetic principle closely aligns with the audience-centered approach, which emphasizes that communicators should adapt their messages to the characteristics, needs, expectations, and capacities of their audiences (Tanjung & Abdullah, 2025). Audience-centered communication views successful communication as a process in which the sender carefully considers how messages will be

perceived and interpreted by recipients (Samsudin & Putri, 2023). Thus, the Hadith reflects a communication model that prioritizes audience understanding rather than merely message transmission.

Similarly, the principle of hikmah resonates with adaptive communication theory, which argues that communicators must adjust their communication styles according to situational and contextual factors. In da'wah, adaptation may involve modifying language, examples, tone, media, and methods of interaction based on the audience's social, cultural, and religious environment (Shonhaji, 2023). Such adaptability enhances the effectiveness of communication and facilitates mutual understanding between the da'i and the mad'u. The principle of hikmah is also reflected in the Prophet's preference for persuasion and gentleness rather than confrontation and coercion. This is evident in the Hadith:

مَا كَانَ الرِّفْقُ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا زَانَهُ وَلَا نُزِعَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا شَانَهُ

"Gentleness is not found in anything except that it beautifies it, and it is not removed from anything except that it disgraces *it."*

This Hadith illustrates that gentleness (rifq) is an essential component of wisdom because effective communication depends not only on the content of the message but also on the manner in which it is conveyed. From the perspective of interpersonal communication theory, polite and empathetic communication fosters trust, reduces resistance, and strengthens relational bonds between communicators and audience (Mauludin & Khadijah, 2025)s. Consequently, gentleness functions as both an ethical value and a strategic communication tool within the framework of Islamic da'wah. Contemporary studies in Islamic communication further support the relevance of hikmah as a contextual communication strategy. Research in da'wah studies suggests that wise and adaptive approaches increase the effectiveness of religious messages, particularly in pluralistic and multicultural societies. In this regard, hikmah serves as a bridge between normative Islamic teachings and the empirical realities faced by diverse audiences. It enables the da'i to respond constructively to social changes, cultural diversity, and the challenges of the digital communication environment (Musthofa, 2023).

Moreover, hikmah includes the ability to select appropriate communication channels and methods, whether through lectures, dialogue, counseling, storytelling, digital media, or exemplary conduct (uswah hasanah). This flexibility reflects the principle of communication adaptation, whereby the effectiveness of a message depends on the suitability of the medium and communication strategy employed. As emphasized in contemporary communication studies, successful communication is influenced not only by message content but also by the communicator's ability to understand and respond to contextual realities (Samsudin & Putri, 2023).

Based on the foregoing discussion, hikmah in da'wah ethics can be conceptualized as an integration of three interrelated dimensions: cognitive wisdom (understanding knowledge and context), communicative adaptation (adjusting messages and methods to audience characteristics), and relational sensitivity (demonstrating empathy, respect, and gentleness in interaction). This conceptualization shows that hikmah is not merely an individual virtue but also a communication framework that combines Islamic ethical values with audience-centered and adaptive communication principles (Altruis & Ansori, 2025). Consequently, the principle of hikmah reinforces the view that Islamic da'wah is contextual, humanistic, dialogical, and oriented toward achieving public welfare (maslahah) in diverse social settings.

2. The Principle of Mau'izhah Hasanah (Good Counsel)

The principle of mau'izhah hasanah (good counsel) constitutes one of the essential pillars of Islamic da'wah ethics, emphasizing the delivery of religious messages through gentle speech, compassion, and emotional-spiritual sensitivity toward the mad'u (J. Hasanah et al., 2025). While the

principle of hikmah focuses primarily on the cognitive dimension of da'wah namely the ability to understand context, analyze audience characteristics, and adapt communication strategies mau'izhah hasanah represents the affective dimension of da'wah, which seeks to touch the emotions, inspire the heart, and foster a positive spiritual response. Thus, if hikmah answers the question of how a message should be strategically communicated, mau'izhah hasanah addresses how the message can emotionally resonate with the audience. In the Prophetic model of da'wah, religious guidance was never conveyed through verbal aggression, humiliation, or judgmental attitudes. Rather, Prophet Muhammad SAW employed persuasive, compassionate, and empathetic communication that nurtured emotional closeness with his audience. The normative basis of this principle can be found in the following Hadith:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيَقُلْ خَيْرًا أَوْ لِيَصْمُتْ

"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day *should speak good or remain silent."*

This Hadith establishes a fundamental ethical standard for communication, emphasizing that every statement should contribute positively to the well-being of others. In the context of da'wah, good counsel is not merely the transmission of correct religious information but the ability to communicate truth in a manner that is constructive, respectful, and emotionally supportive. The effectiveness of da'wah therefore depends not only on the accuracy of the message but also on the emotional experience created during the communication process. Another Hadith further reinforces the principle of gentleness in delivering counsel:

الْعُنْفِ عَلَى يُعْطِي لَا مَا الرِّفْقِ عَلَى وَيُعْطِي الرِّفْقَ يُحِبُّ رَفِيقٌ اللَّهَ إِنَّ

"Indeed, Allah is Gentle and loves gentleness, and He grants through gentleness what He does not grant through harshness."

This Hadith demonstrates that emotional sensitivity and kindness are not simply communication techniques but are theological values endorsed by Islam. Gentleness creates psychological safety, reduces defensiveness, and opens the audience to reflection and self-improvement. Consequently, mau'izhah hasanah functions as a mechanism for building trust and emotional receptivity, enabling religious messages to be accepted more willingly. From the perspective of communication theory, mau'izhah hasanah corresponds closely to the affective dimension of persuasive communication, which emphasizes the role of emotions, empathy, and relational connection in influencing attitudes and behavior (Ibrahim & Riyadi, 2023). Persuasion research suggests that messages delivered with warmth, sincerity, and emotional relevance are more likely to foster positive responses than messages relying solely on logical argumentation. In this regard, mau'izhah hasanah complements hikmah: while hikmah appeals primarily to understanding and reason, mau'izhah hasanah appeals to feelings, values, and moral consciousness.

Contemporary studies in Islamic communication support this distinction. Research indicates that good counsel increases audience openness to religious messages, particularly when conveyed in simple, relevant, and non-patronizing language. Moreover, scholars argue that mau'izhah hasanah strengthens emotional bonds between the da'i and the mad'u, creating a dialogical and supportive communication environment that encourages voluntary and sustainable behavioral transformation (Y. F. Hidayat, 2022). Such an approach is particularly important in pluralistic societies, where respect, empathy, and emotional intelligence are crucial for effective engagement. Conceptually, mau'izhah hasanah may be understood through three interrelated affective dimensions: empathy, which enables the da'i to understand the emotional condition of the audience; compassion, which motivates the delivery of guidance with kindness and care; and encouragement, which inspires hope, motivation, and spiritual

growth. These dimensions distinguish mau'izhah hasanah from hikmah, which primarily operates within the cognitive and strategic domains of communication.

Therefore, the principle of mau'izhah hasanah emphasizes courteous, empathetic, and emotionally engaging communication that nurtures both spiritual awareness and personal transformation. Together with hikmah, it forms a complementary framework of da'wah ethics in which cognitive understanding and emotional connection work simultaneously to achieve the broader objectives of Islamic da'wah (Zulfahmi et al., 2023). This principle reflects Islam's mission as rahmatan lil 'alamin, where guidance is offered through compassion rather than coercion, and through inspiration rather than judgment. In contemporary societies characterized by diversity and critical public discourse, the affective approach embodied in mau'izhah hasanah remains highly relevant for fostering meaningful and sustainable engagement.

3. The Principle of Mujādalah bi al-Latī Hiya Aḥsan (Constructive Dialogue)

The principle of mujādalah bi al-latī hiya aḥsan (dialogue in the best manner) constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of Islamic da'wah ethics, particularly in addressing differences in beliefs, opinions, and social backgrounds (Abdulsalam, 2025). Conceptually, mujādalah refers to dialogue, discussion, or argumentation, while the phrase bi al-latī hiya aḥsan emphasizes that such exchanges must be conducted in the most courteous, ethical, and constructive manner. Consequently, the objective of da'wah is not to achieve argumentative victory or intellectual domination, but rather to facilitate understanding, foster mutual respect, and maintain social harmony. This principle reflects Islam's recognition of diversity as a social reality that should be managed through ethical communication rather than confrontation. The Prophetic model of da'wah demonstrates that dialogue served as an important means of conveying truth while preserving human dignity and social cohesion. One Hadith relevant to this principle states:

أَنَا زَعِيمٌ بِبَيْتٍ فِي رَبَضِ الْجَنَّةِ لِمَنْ تَرَكَ الْمِرَاءَ وَإِنْ كَانَ مُحِقًّا

"I guarantee a house on the outskirts of Paradise for one who abandons argumentation even when he is right."

This Hadith indicates that Islam discourages ego-driven and destructive debates. Even when an individual possesses the stronger argument, preserving relationships and social harmony is considered more valuable than winning disputes. The Hadith therefore shifts the focus of dialogue from competition to understanding, emphasizing ethical interaction over personal triumph. The ethical dimension of dialogue is further reinforced in another Hadith:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيَقُلْ خَيْرًا أَوْ لِيَصْمُتْ

"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak good or remain silent."

This Hadith establishes a fundamental norm of communication ethics, requiring participants in dialogue to exercise self-control, avoid provocation, and refrain from harmful speech. In the context of da'wah, such ethical restraint is particularly important because religious discussions often involve deeply held beliefs and identities that can easily generate tension when approached insensitively. From an analytical perspective, mujādalah bi al-latī hiya aḥsan encompasses several key elements of communication ethics, including respect for others, openness to different perspectives, rational argumentation, active listening, and civility in discourse (Shonhaji, 2023). These elements transform dialogue from a mechanism of persuasion into a process of mutual learning and constructive engagement. Accordingly, the success of da'wah depends not only on the validity of religious

arguments but also on the quality of interpersonal and social relationships established during communication.

This principle closely corresponds with several contemporary dialogue frameworks. First, it aligns with dialogic communication theory, which emphasizes reciprocity, mutual understanding, and relationship-building rather than one-way persuasion. Similar to dialogic communication, mujādalah bi al-latī hiya aḥsan views communication as a collaborative process through which participants seek understanding rather than domination. Second, it resonates with Habermas's theory of communicative action, which argues that dialogue should aim at reaching mutual understanding through rational and ethical discourse rather than strategic manipulation. Third, it shares common ground with deliberative dialogue models, where participants engage respectfully with differing viewpoints in order to identify common values and collective solutions (Musthofa, 2023). Finally, it parallels contemporary interfaith dialogue frameworks, which prioritize respect, listening, empathy, and peaceful coexistence among individuals from different religious backgrounds.

Empirical studies in accredited Indonesian academic journals support the effectiveness of such dialogical approaches. Research has shown that courteous and inclusive dialogue reduces social conflict, strengthens intergroup tolerance, and enhances the acceptance of religious messages in pluralistic societies (Saada & Indra, 2022). Similarly, studies in Islamic communication have found that confrontational and exclusionary forms of da'wah often generate resistance, whereas respectful and participatory dialogue fosters greater receptivity and engagement (Ibrahim & Riyadi, 2023). These findings confirm that ethical dialogue contributes not only to successful communication but also to broader social cohesion.

A synthesis of the Prophetic teachings and contemporary communication theories reveals that mujādalah bi al-latī hiya aḥsan is characterized by four interconnected dimensions: respectful engagement, rational argumentation, empathetic listening, and orientation toward mutual understanding. Respectful engagement ensures that differences are addressed without hostility; rational argumentation promotes evidence-based discussion; empathetic listening enables participants to appreciate alternative perspectives; and mutual understanding shifts the goal of dialogue from victory to relationship-building. Together, these dimensions form a comprehensive framework for ethical communication in Islamic da'wah. In summary, the central insight of mujādalah bi al-latī hiya aḥsan is that disagreement should be managed through ethical, constructive, and dialogical interaction. While modern dialogue frameworks emphasize reciprocity, deliberation, and communicative rationality, Islamic da'wah ethics enrich these approaches by grounding dialogue in spiritual values, moral responsibility, and the pursuit of maslahah (public welfare) (J. Hasanah et al., 2025). Therefore, this principle affirms that da'wah is not an arena for winning arguments or asserting superiority, but a process of presenting truth with wisdom, respect, and compassion. In contemporary pluralistic societies, where differences are inevitable, mujādalah bi al-latī hiya aḥsan remains highly relevant as a model for fostering peaceful coexistence, religious moderation, and constructive social engagement.

4. The Principle of Uswah Hasanah (Exemplary Conduct)

The principle of uswah hasanah (exemplary conduct) constitutes a fundamental dimension of Islamic da'wah ethics, emphasizing that the effectiveness of da'wah is determined not only by rhetorical ability or intellectual competence but also by the moral integrity and behavioral consistency of the da'i. In this perspective, da'wah is not merely the verbal transmission of religious teachings but the embodiment of Islamic values in everyday life (Ridho & Hariyadi, 2021). Consequently, the credibility of da'wah depends largely on whether the messenger reflects the values being communicated. Exemplary conduct becomes a powerful medium of da'wah because it appeals not only to reason but also to observation, experience, and social trust. In the Prophetic model of da'wah, exemplary conduct was the primary mechanism through which Islamic teachings gained acceptance within society. This is reflected in the Hadith describing the mission of Prophet Muhammad SAW:

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأُتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ

"Indeed, I was sent to perfect noble character*."*

This Hadith indicates that the ultimate objective of Islamic da'wah is moral transformation. Therefore, a da'i is expected to embody Islamic values personally before inviting others to practice them. Da'wah becomes most persuasive when moral teachings are demonstrated through concrete actions rather than merely articulated through words. The centrality of exemplary conduct is further reinforced in the narration describing the character of the Prophet:

كَانَ خُلُقُهُ الْقُرْآنَ

"His character was the Qur'an."

This statement illustrates that the Prophet represented the living embodiment of Qur'anic teachings. His conduct transformed abstract religious principles into observable social practices. In the context of da'wah ethics, this suggests that religious messages become more convincing when audiences witness their practical implementation in the behavior of the communicator. The importance of consistency between words and actions is emphasized in another Hadith:

يُؤْتَى بِالرَّجُلِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَيُلْقَى فِي النَّارِ... كَانَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلَا يَأْتِيهِ

"A man will be brought *on the Day of Judgment and thrown into the Fire… he used to command good but did not practice it himself."*

This Hadith provides a strong ethical warning against hypocrisy and inconsistency. A discrepancy between preaching and personal conduct undermines the legitimacy of da'wah and diminishes the moral authority of the da'i. Consequently, exemplary conduct is not merely an ethical recommendation but an essential prerequisite for effective religious communication. From an analytical perspective, uswah hasanah can be understood through the concept of source credibility, a major theory in communication studies. Source credibility theory argues that audiences are more likely to accept messages from communicators perceived as trustworthy, competent, and morally upright. In the context of da'wah, credibility is established not only through religious knowledge but also through integrity, honesty, and consistency between speech and action. A da'i who demonstrates these qualities possesses greater persuasive influence because audiences perceive the message as authentic and reliable.

Closely related to credibility is the concept of trust, which represents one of the most important outcomes of exemplary conduct. Trust develops when audiences repeatedly observe consistency between what a communicator says and what he or she does. In da'wah, trust functions as social capital that facilitates acceptance of religious guidance and strengthens long-term relationships between the da'i and the mad'u. Conversely, when inconsistency or ethical misconduct occurs, trust can quickly deteriorate, resulting in skepticism toward both the messenger and the message itself. Therefore, uswah hasanah serves as a mechanism for sustaining relational trust within the da'wah process. Furthermore, the principle of uswah hasanah closely aligns with contemporary theories of ethical leadership. Ethical leadership emphasizes that leaders influence followers not only through formal authority but also through personal example, moral conduct, and value-based behavior. Similar to ethical leaders, a da'i functions as a moral guide whose actions communicate norms and expectations to the community. Through exemplary behavior, the da'i creates a model that others may emulate, thereby fostering

ethical awareness and positive behavioral change. In this regard, leadership in da'wah is not exercised through coercion but through moral influence and personal integrity.

This understanding is further supported by social learning theory, which suggests that individuals learn and adopt behaviors by observing credible role models. People are more likely to imitate individuals whom they respect and trust. Thus, the effectiveness of da'wah is often determined by the extent to which the da'i serves as a living example of the values being promoted. Research in accredited academic journals confirms that the exemplary conduct of a da'i significantly influences audience acceptance of da'wah messages and contributes to the development of religious commitment and social trust (Giofandi, 2025). Studies in Islamic communication also indicate that many contemporary challenges in da'wah stem not from deficiencies in religious knowledge or communication technology but from crises of credibility and ethical consistency among religious communicators. This finding highlights the strategic importance of personal ethics in sustaining public confidence and moral authority. In contemporary societies characterized by critical thinking, transparency, and increased public scrutiny, audiences often evaluate the authenticity of religious messages through the observable conduct of those who deliver them.

A synthesis of the Prophetic teachings and contemporary communication theories reveals that uswah hasanah consists of three interconnected dimensions: credibility (integrity and consistency), trustworthiness (building enduring relational confidence), and ethical leadership (influencing others through moral example). Together, these dimensions establish a framework in which da'wah becomes not merely informative but also performative and transformative. The message is communicated not only through speech but also through lived experience and observable practice. In summary, the principle of uswah hasanah affirms that effective da'wah requires the integration of words and actions. Exemplary conduct is not simply a complementary aspect of preaching but the very foundation of persuasive and sustainable da'wah. By cultivating credibility, trust, and ethical leadership, uswah hasanah transforms religious communication into a powerful instrument of moral and social change. In modern societies, where public trust is increasingly dependent on authenticity and accountability, exemplary conduct remains one of the most influential and enduring forms of Islamic da'wah.

Contemporary Relevance of Da'wah Ethics: Freedom, Resilience, Social Cohesion, and Hadith Hermeneutics

1. The Principle of Non-Coercion and Freedom of Religion

The principle of non-coercion (lā ikrāh) constitutes one of the most important ethical foundations of Islamic da'wah. Da'wah is fundamentally an invitation rather than an imposition, respecting the freedom of individuals to accept or reject religious teachings through conscious choice. In the Prophetic model, the role of the da'i is limited to conveying the message, while guidance ultimately belongs to Allah. This principle is reflected in the Hadith:

إِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ

"Your duty is only to convey the message*."*

This Hadith establishes an important theological boundary: humans are responsible for communicating truth, not for controlling the beliefs of others. Consequently, coercion in matters of faith contradicts both the ethical and theological foundations of da'wah. The Prophet further emphasized:

بَشِّرُوا وَلَا تُنَفِّرُوا

"Give glad tidings and do not drive people away."

This Hadith demonstrates that persuasion, encouragement, and empathy are preferred over pressure and intimidation. Effective da'wah seeks voluntary acceptance rather than forced compliance. From a contemporary perspective, this principle corresponds closely with modern concepts of freedom of religion, freedom of conscience, and human dignity, which are recognized in international human rights discourse. While modern human rights frameworks derive freedom of religion from individual autonomy, Islamic da'wah ethics derive it from the recognition that faith must emerge from sincere conviction rather than external coercion. Both perspectives converge in affirming that authentic belief cannot be imposed. Therefore, the principle of non-coercion illustrates the compatibility between Islamic da'wah ethics and contemporary discussions concerning religious liberty and pluralism.

2. The Principle of Patience and Perseverance: Resilience and Emotional Intelligence

Patience (ṣabr) is another central principle of da'wah ethics. Beyond self-restraint, ṣabr encompasses perseverance, consistency, emotional stability, and commitment to long-term goals despite challenges and opposition. The Prophet SAW stated:

"No one is given a gift *better and more comprehensive than patience."*

This Hadith highlights patience as a strategic virtue that enables a da'i to remain committed to ethical conduct even under difficult circumstances. Another Hadith states:

عَجَبًا لِأَمْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِ... إِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ ضَرَّاءُ صَبَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ

"How wonderful is the affair *of the believer... if hardship befalls him and he remains patient, then it is good for him."*

Within contemporary psychological literature, patience can be understood through the framework of resilience theory, which refers to the capacity to adapt positively in the face of adversity, stress, and social challenges. Similar to resilience, ṣabr allows a da'i to sustain motivation and maintain constructive engagement despite rejection or criticism. Furthermore, ṣabr is closely related to emotional intelligence, particularly the dimensions of self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and social competence. A patient da'i is able to manage emotions effectively, avoid impulsive reactions, and maintain positive relationships with diverse audiences. Thus, patience functions not merely as a spiritual virtue but also as a psychological competency that strengthens the effectiveness of da'wah communication.

Implementation of Da'wah Ethics in Contemporary Society

1. Communication Ethics in the Digital Era

The expansion of digital communication has transformed the landscape of da'wah. Social media platforms enable the rapid dissemination of religious messages but also create opportunities for misinformation, hate speech, polarization, and online hostility. The Prophet SAW taught:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيَقُلْ خَيْرًا أَوْ لِيَصْمُتْ

"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should *speak good or remain silent."*

This Hadith serves as a foundational principle for responsible digital communication. Ethical da'wah in online environments requires accuracy, courtesy, verification of information, and respect for others. The principle is particularly relevant in combating disinformation and toxic communication practices that undermine social harmony.

2. Da'wah and Social Cohesion

In multicultural and pluralistic societies, da'wah plays an important role in strengthening social cohesion. The Prophet instructed:

يَسِّرُوا وَلَا تُعَسِّرُوا، وَبَشِّرُوا وَلَا تُنَفِّرُوا

"Make things easy and do not make them difficult*; give glad tidings and do not drive people away."*

This Hadith promotes inclusivity, accessibility, and empathy. Rather than deepening social divisions, ethical da'wah seeks to build bridges across differences and contribute to mutual understanding. Consequently, da'wah becomes a mechanism for promoting tolerance, moderation, and peaceful coexistence.

3. Ethical Communication and Conflict Management

The Prophet also taught:

أَنَا زَعِيمٌ بِبَيْتٍ فِي رَبَضِ الْجَنَّةِ لِمَنْ تَرَكَ الْمِرَاءَ وَإِنْ كَانَ مُحِقًّا

"I guarantee a house on the outskirts *of Paradise for one who abandons argumentation even when he is right."*

This Hadith provides an important framework for managing disagreement in contemporary public discourse. In an era characterized by ideological polarization and online disputes, ethical communication requires restraint, active listening, and constructive dialogue. Winning arguments is less important than preserving relationships and social harmony. Together, these dimensions demonstrate that da'wah ethics are not limited to personal morality but function as a broader framework for cultivating healthy public communication and social stability.

Hadith Hermeneutics Framework in Understanding Da'wah Ethics

The interpretation of Hadiths concerning da'wah ethics in this study employs a hermeneutical framework that integrates textual, historical, ethical, and contextual dimensions. This approach is necessary because Hadiths are not merely historical texts but normative sources that contain enduring ethical values capable of guiding Muslim societies across different social and cultural contexts. Accordingly, understanding Hadiths on da'wah requires moving beyond literal readings toward a comprehensive analysis that explores both their original meaning and their contemporary relevance. The first stage involves textual analysis (al-qirā'ah al-naṣṣiyyah), which focuses on examining the linguistic structure, terminology, and immediate meaning of the Hadith. Through this stage, the researcher seeks to identify the explicit message conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad SAW and to understand the normative guidance contained within the text. Textual analysis provides the foundational understanding necessary for subsequent interpretive stages.

The second stage consists of historical analysis (asbāb al-wurūd), which examines the socio-historical circumstances surrounding the emergence and transmission of the Hadith. This analysis enables a deeper understanding of the social realities, cultural conditions, and specific situations addressed by the Prophet. By situating the Hadith within its historical context, the interpreter can distinguish between context-specific applications and broader ethical principles intended for universal guidance. The third stage is ethical-maqāṣid analysis, which seeks to uncover the higher objectives and moral purposes underlying the Hadith. Rather than limiting interpretation to literal expressions, this stage focuses on identifying the ethical values promoted by the Prophet, such as justice, compassion, wisdom, tolerance, human dignity, and social welfare (maslahah). Through this perspective, Hadiths

are understood as instruments for realizing the broader objectives of Islamic teachings and promoting human flourishing.

The final stage involves contextual application, whereby the ethical principles derived from the Hadith are translated into contemporary realities. This stage recognizes that while the core values of Islamic teachings remain constant, the methods and media through which they are implemented may evolve in response to social, cultural, and technological changes. Consequently, values such as gentleness, moderation, patience, constructive dialogue, and exemplary conduct can be applied to contemporary issues including digital communication, multicultural coexistence, interreligious relations, social cohesion, and the ethical challenges of online interaction. Through this hermeneutical framework, Hadiths emphasizing gentleness (rifq), wisdom (hikmah), patience (ṣabr), constructive dialogue (mujādalah bi al-latī hiya aḥsan), and exemplary conduct (uswah hasanah) are understood not merely as historical instructions addressed to a particular community, but as enduring ethical principles capable of responding to contemporary challenges. The framework also facilitates a distinction between universal and permanent values (tsawābit) such as honesty, justice, compassion, and wisdom and contextual and adaptable elements (mutaghayyirāt), including communication methods, media platforms, and strategies of da'wah. Such a distinction allows Islamic teachings to maintain their normative authenticity while remaining responsive to changing social realities.

Therefore, Hadith-based da'wah ethics should be viewed as a dynamic and transformative framework that bridges classical Islamic scholarship with contemporary developments in communication theory, social psychology, leadership studies, and intercultural relations. By integrating textual fidelity with contextual relevance, this hermeneutical approach ensures that the Prophetic message remains both faithful to its original intent and capable of addressing the complex needs of modern societies.

Discussion

Towards an Integrative Framework of Da'wah Ethics: Comparative Insights from Hadith and Contemporary Religious Communication Studies

The ethical principles of da'wah derived from Hadith demonstrate significant relevance when examined alongside contemporary international scholarship on religious communication. While classical Islamic sources formulate these principles within a theological framework, many of their underlying values parallel concepts that have emerged in communication studies, interfaith dialogue research, leadership studies, and social psychology. Such comparisons reveal that Islamic da'wah ethics possess both normative religious significance and broader applicability within contemporary communication discourse. First, the principle of hikmah (wisdom) closely corresponds with the audience-centered approach and adaptive communication theory widely discussed in communication studies. Contemporary scholars emphasize that effective communication requires sensitivity to audience characteristics, cultural backgrounds, and situational contexts. Similarly, the Prophetic instruction to communicate according to the audience's level of understanding reflects a sophisticated model of communicative adaptation. However, Islamic da'wah ethics extend beyond strategic effectiveness by grounding communication in moral responsibility and the pursuit of maslahah (public welfare). Thus, while modern communication theory primarily focuses on effectiveness, hikmah integrates effectiveness with ethical accountability.

Second, the principle of mau'izhah hasanah (good counsel) resonates with theories of persuasive communication and relational communication. International studies have demonstrated that empathy, emotional connection, and supportive communication significantly enhance message acceptance and behavioral change. Likewise, the Prophetic model of compassionate counsel emphasizes emotional engagement and moral encouragement rather than coercion. The distinction lies in the fact that Islamic da'wah frames emotional persuasion as a spiritual and ethical obligation, not merely a communication technique. Third, the principle of mujādalah bi al-latī hiya aḥsan (constructive dialogue) shares substantial similarities with dialogic communication theory, deliberative democracy, and interfaith

dialogue frameworks. Scholars such as Habermas argue that dialogue should aim at mutual understanding rather than strategic domination. Likewise, contemporary interreligious dialogue emphasizes respect, active listening, reciprocity, and peaceful coexistence. The Hadith-based principle of constructive dialogue similarly prioritizes mutual understanding and ethical engagement. However, Islamic da'wah ethics further contribute a spiritual dimension by linking ethical dialogue to accountability before God and the preservation of social harmony (ukhuwah).

Fourth, the principle of uswah hasanah (exemplary conduct) aligns closely with international research on ethical leadership, source credibility, and social learning theory. Studies consistently show that communicators who demonstrate integrity and behavioral consistency are more persuasive and influential. In religious communication, credibility often determines whether audiences accept or reject messages. The Prophetic emphasis on consistency between words and actions anticipates contemporary theories suggesting that trust is built through observable ethical behavior. Therefore, uswah hasanah may be understood as an integrated model of credibility, trustworthiness, and ethical leadership. Fifth, the principle of non-coercion reflects strong convergence with international discussions concerning freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. Modern human rights frameworks affirm that religious commitment must be based on voluntary choice rather than external pressure. Similarly, the Prophetic model of da'wah emphasizes persuasion, invitation, and respect for individual agency. While the philosophical foundations differ, both perspectives reject coercive approaches to religious belief and support the principle that authentic faith requires personal conviction.

Sixth, the principle of patience (ṣabr) corresponds with contemporary concepts of resilience and emotional intelligence. Research in psychology identifies resilience as the capacity to adapt positively to adversity, while emotional intelligence involves self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal competence. The Prophetic model of patience incorporates these dimensions by encouraging emotional control, perseverance, and constructive responses to rejection. Thus, ṣabr functions not only as a spiritual virtue but also as a psychological resource that enhances communication effectiveness and leadership capacity. The comparison also reveals an important distinction between Hadith-based da'wah ethics and many contemporary communication models. Most modern theories focus primarily on communication outcomes, such as persuasion, behavioral change, relationship management, or conflict resolution. In contrast, Islamic da'wah ethics place equal emphasis on the ethical character of the communicator, the moral legitimacy of communication methods, and accountability before God. Consequently, success in da'wah is measured not only by effectiveness but also by adherence to ethical and spiritual principles.

These comparisons suggest that Hadith-based da'wah ethics contribute significantly to global discussions on religious communication. Rather than functioning merely as a normative religious framework, they offer a comprehensive model integrating communication competence, emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, social harmony, and spiritual responsibility. Such an integrative perspective may enrich contemporary international scholarship by providing a value-based approach to communication that balances effectiveness with ethical integrity. Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that the ethical principles of da'wah derived from Hadith are not only relevant within Islamic studies but also contribute to broader interdisciplinary discussions involving communication studies, leadership studies, interfaith relations, psychology, and social cohesion. This demonstrates the enduring relevance of Prophetic communication ethics in addressing the challenges of increasingly pluralistic, digitalized, and interconnected global societies.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad SAW provide a comprehensive ethical framework for da'wah based on the principles of hikmah (wisdom), mauʻizhah hasanah (good counsel), mujādalah bi al-latī hiya aḥsan (courteous dialogue), uswah hasanah (exemplary conduct), non-coercion, and patience. These principles reflect a humanistic, persuasive, and socially constructive approach to da'wah that remains relevant to contemporary challenges, including digital

communication, pluralism, and globalization. The findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of da'wah depends not only on the content of the message but also on the ethical manner in which it is communicated. Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of Islamic communication and da'wah studies by developing a Hadith-based framework of da'wah ethics through a thematic (maudhu'i) approach and by contextualizing Prophetic teachings within contemporary social realities. This contribution helps bridge classical Islamic textual sources and modern communication challenges. Nevertheless, this study is limited to library-based analysis and focuses primarily on textual interpretation of Hadith sources. It does not examine how these ethical principles are implemented in contemporary da'wah practices or how audiences respond to them in different social contexts. Therefore, future research may employ empirical methods, such as interviews, surveys, or digital ethnography, to investigate the application of Hadith-based da'wah ethics in social media environments, multicultural societies, and contemporary religious communication practices.

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