

P-ISSN: 2338-8617

E-ISSN: 2443-2067

Jurnal Ilmiah

PEURADEUN

Vol. 13, No. 3, September 2025



JIP

The Indonesian Journal of the Social Sciences
www.journal.scadindependent.org
DOI Prefix Number: 10.26811

INDEX COPERNICUS
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in Muslim Minority Communities**

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Article in Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun

Available at : <https://journal.scadindependent.org/index.php/jipeuradeun/article/view/1998>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v13i3.1998>

How to Cite this Article

APA : Kohar, W., Kustati, M., Jemkhairil, J., Ashadi, A., Aqil, M., Saka, P. A., & Alfred, A. (2025). The Dramaturgy of Da'wah for Religious Communicators in Muslim Minority Communities. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 13(3), 1747-1774. <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v13i3.1998>

Others Visit : <https://journal.scadindependent.org/index.php/jipeuradeun>

Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun (JIP), *the Indonesian Journal of the Social Sciences*, is a leading peer-reviewed and open-access journal, which publishes scholarly works, and specializes in the Social Sciences that emphasize contemporary Asian issues with interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches. JIP is published by SCAD Independent and published 3 times a year (January, May, and September) with p-ISSN: 2338-8617 and e-ISSN: 2443-2067. JIP has become a CrossRef member. Therefore, all articles published will have a unique DOI number. JIP has been accredited Rank 1 (Sinta 1) by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, the Republic of Indonesia, through the Decree of the Director-General of Higher Education, Research, and Technology No. 72/E/KPT/2024, dated April 1, 2024. This accreditation is valid until the May 2027 edition.

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JIP indexed/included in Web of Science, Scopus, Sinta, MAS, Index Copernicus International, Erih Plus, Garuda, Moraref, Scilit, Sherpa/Romeo, Google Scholar, OAJI, PKP, Index, Crossref, BASE, ROAD, GIF, Advanced Science Index, JournalTOCs, ISI, SIS, ESJI, SSRN, ResearchGate, Mendeley and [others](#).





THE DRAMATURGY OF DA'WAH FOR RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATORS IN MUSLIM MINORITY COMMUNITIES

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Received: October 3, 2024	Accepted: September 3, 2025	Published: September 30, 2025
Article Url: https://journal.scadindependent.org/index.php/jipeuradeun/article/view/1998		

Abstract

Da'wah strategies continue to evolve in collaboration with societal trends and receptivity. A dissonance between societal developments and the methods of religious propagation may result in the rejection of religious messages and strained interactions between majority and minority groups. Therefore, a more contextualized approach is required to enhance the effectiveness of da'wah. This study explored dramaturgical da'wah as a strategic framework employed by religious communicators to convey religious messages through frontstage and backstage performances. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, data were collected through interviews and observations of Muslim minority preachers on Nias Island. The findings demonstrated that da'wah practices were implemented by following dramaturgical principles, engaging audiences differently across stages. The success of this strategy was influenced by segmented communication methods, cultural adaptation to local traditions, and the portrayal of Islam as peaceful and open to interfaith dialogue. This approach contributed to fostering interreligious harmony and sustaining the presence of Muslim minorities in Nias. The study offers a novel perspective, highlighting that the development of da'wah strategies must consider the field of experience, particularly in regions where Muslims are a minority.

Keywords: *Da'wah Strategy; Dramaturgy; Religious Communicators; Muslim Minorities.*



A. Introduction

Da'wah strategies within multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, as practiced by minority religious communicators, often generate complex and diverse dynamics of reception (islamic-center.or.id, 2020; NU online, 2018; UII, 2020). This complexity is rooted in the social reality wherein the boundaries of identity have increasingly solidified – ethnically, culturally, and ideologically (Bangstad & Linge, 2015; Bruckmayr, 2020; Chaplin, 2018). In such contexts, minority religious communicators are confronted with the challenge of navigating diverse symbols, cultural norms, and religious messages within differentiated social spaces (Hatina, 2016; Weismann, 2019). The case of Muslim minorities in Nias Island, where Christians constitute the majority, represents a vivid example of these dynamics, in which religious interactions must be managed carefully to prevent conflict and sustain harmony.

Addressing these challenges requires *da'wah* strategies that focus not only on the substantive content of the message but also on the careful selection of materials and delivery methods tailored to heterogeneous audiences (Hashemi & Yeganeh, 2009). The effectiveness of such strategies is measured by the communicator's ability to adapt communication styles, narratives, and message content to suit the audience and the prevailing social context (Bushra, 2023; Olsson, 2014; Weismann, 2019). In practice, this means that Muslim minorities must find ways to maintain their identity while simultaneously presenting Islam as inclusive and peaceful. For minority Muslim *da'wah* practices in Nias, this strategy is performed in a manner akin to a social performance, as explained in dramaturgical theory, where communicators play distinct roles in two arenas: the front stage and the backstage (Goffman, 2017; Scheibe & Barrett, 2017; Trysnes & Synnes, 2022). On the front stage, *da'wah* emphasizes inclusive values to build bridges with non-Muslims, while on the backstage, it reinforces internal Islamic identity within the community.

However, the majority of existing studies on *da'wah* strategies tend to frame minority Muslim *da'wah* within a binary logic – either adopting exclusive *da'wah* to preserve a strong Islamic identity, which risks provoking discrimination from majority groups (Cepoi, 2013; Chen & Dorairajoo, 2020; Christensen,

2021; Gugler, 2009; Pollachom et al., 2022; Yilmaz & Demir, 2023), or embracing accommodative *da'wah*, which may erode the identity and religious values of the Muslim community (Kadir, 2021; Prasetiawan, 2021; Rufai, 2012; Thaib, 2020; Turki et al., 2025; Yusuf et al., 2025). This dichotomy has structured much of the debate around minority *da'wah*, limiting scholarly perspectives to two poles of exclusivity and accommodation.

Previous studies on minority *da'wah* have generally emphasized this dichotomy between preserving religious identity and accommodating the dominant culture (Guleng et al., 2019; Yilmaz & Demir, 2023). For example, research on Muslim minorities in the Philippines (Guleng et al., 2019) highlights the challenges of maintaining Islamic identity in predominantly non-Muslim environments, while studies on Turkey's global Islamic populism (Yilmaz & Demir, 2023) emphasize the construction of identity across borders. Similarly, scholarship on Salafi movements in Europe portrays exclusivist *da'wah* strategies that often provoke public suspicion and contribute to marginalization (Emmerich, 2023; Gugler, 2009). Conversely, accommodative strategies – such as interfaith engagement in multicultural societies – may create space for dialogue but can risk charges of syncretism or dilution of Islamic values (Rufai, 2012; Prasetiawan, 2021).

Yet, the existing literature has to explicitly connect these two orientations or to explore how religious communicators might employ both strategies simultaneously in different contexts. Theoretically, this study positions itself at the intersection of prior research on minority *da'wah* and the conceptualization of religious communication as a process of identity negotiation within diverse social spaces. In this study, dramaturgical theory is employed to interpret *da'wah* practice not merely as the transmission of theological messages, but as a performative act occurring in two primary arenas: the front stage, where inclusive messages are delivered to foster interfaith harmony, and the backstage, where exclusive *da'wah* messages are conveyed to the internal Muslim community (Caplan, 2014; Goffman, 2017; Robinson & Schulz, 2016; Sohrabi & Farquharson, 2016). This dual orientation moves beyond the rigid dichotomy of preserving versus relinquishing identity, enabling *da'wah* practitioners to



play adaptive social roles and negotiate identity dynamically within plural social contexts.

Globally, scholars have documented similar adaptive strategies among Muslim minorities. In Europe, theological reinterpretations have reframed Muslim presence from *Dar al-Harb* (territory of conflict) to *Dar al-Da'wah* or *Dar al-Shahada* (territory of testimony), recasting Muslims as moral partners in society (De Angelo, 2013). In Germany, Salafi *da'wah* has evolved from confrontational activism to institutional strategies that work within legal frameworks (Emmerich, 2023). In Thailand, the hijab has been redefined by Muslim women as both a symbol of Islamic revival and a means of social integration (Pollachom et al., 2022). In South Africa, *da'wah* movements and Sufi tariqahs have developed complementary strategies of outreach – social activism on the one hand, spiritual media on the other (Haron, 2005). In Singapore, Muslim women have utilized social media to establish informal religious authority without directly confronting traditional male hierarchies (Jamil, 2016). These diverse contexts illustrate that minority *da'wah* strategies often involve balancing exclusivity and inclusivity in ways that are highly context-specific.

By situating the Nias Muslim minority within this broader global discourse, this study highlights the importance of dramaturgical adaptation as a universal challenge for Muslim minorities. The use of dramaturgical theory makes it possible to conceptualize *da'wah* as a staged performance, in which communicators manage impressions across frontstage and backstage arenas to achieve both social harmony and identity preservation. This perspective provides a more flexible analytical framework compared to earlier dichotomous models and better reflects the lived realities of minority Muslim communities.

The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to integrate dramaturgical theory with intercultural communication perspectives to explain *da'wah* as performative identity negotiation in plural societies. Unlike previous works that largely treat *da'wah* as doctrinal preaching or institutional activity, this research frames it as impression management that shifts according to audience,

context, and setting. In doing so, the study offers a new conceptual approach to understanding *da'wah* in Indonesia's minority Muslim contexts, while also contributing insights relevant to global discussions on interfaith communication.

The primary aim of this study is therefore to map the conception and practice of dramaturgical *da'wah* among Muslim minorities within predominantly non-Muslim societies. This mapping is significant as it entails identifying and categorizing how minority religious communicators convey their messages – emphasizing interfaith solidarity and rejecting confrontational approaches to religious outreach. Through this mapping, the study seeks to uncover three key elements: the conceptual framework of dramaturgical *da'wah*, the factors contributing to its success, and its impact on community life. This dual focus on both mapping and analysis offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of dramaturgical *da'wah* within Indonesia's contemporary multicultural context.

This study argues that the integration of dramaturgical and intercultural communication theories offers a nuanced understanding of *da'wah* practices. Such integration is essential for analyzing both the successes achieved through strategies that emphasize solidarity and cohesion, and for offering theoretical insights that are relevant to contemporary conditions. By focusing on Nias as a case study, this research fills a significant gap in the literature and provides a foundation for further inquiry into the dynamics of minority Muslim *da'wah* in Indonesia and beyond.

B. Method

This study adopted a qualitative exploratory design to capture the dynamics of dramaturgical *da'wah* among Muslim minorities on Nias Island, North Sumatra. The choice of this approach was grounded in the need to understand *da'wah* not only as a theological transmission but also as a social performance that requires adaptation to multicultural settings. By employing Creswell's qualitative framework, the research process was structured into a series of flexible and iterative stages that allowed theoretical perspectives from dramaturgical theory and intercultural communication to be integrated into the fieldwork.



The field site of Nias Island was chosen because of its unique religious composition, where Muslims live as a minority in a predominantly Christian society. Within this setting, *da'wah* communicators must constantly negotiate their identity and messages in both public and private arenas. To access this reality, participants were selected purposively, focusing on religious communicators who play an active role in the local community. They included preachers and administrators from Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Al Washliyah, as well as state-appointed religious instructors. In total, 15 individuals were interviewed, representing both men and women across a broad age range, thus ensuring a diversity of perspectives regarding strategies of religious communication in a minority context.

Data collection combined in-depth interviews and participant observation. Interviews explored the communicators' experiences in delivering messages, their strategies of cultural adaptation, and their reflections on interfaith relations. Observations were carried out in two types of settings: public forums, such as government programs and interfaith gatherings, which functioned as the "frontstage", and internal Muslim community activities, such as *majelis ta'lim* and mosque lectures, which represented the "backstage." These observations made it possible to witness how communicators shifted their style and content depending on the social arena. In addition, secondary data such as organizational documents, media reports, and relevant literature were used to enrich and triangulate the findings (Walidin et al., 2025; 2023).

The process of data analysis was conducted in stages that moved back and forth between the field and the theoretical framework. All interview transcripts and field notes were first organized into a database. They were then read repeatedly to identify emerging narratives concerning *da'wah* practices. These narratives were coded into dramaturgical categories—such as "frontstage performance" and "backstage reinforcement"—as well as into intercultural communication dimensions, including adaptation to local traditions and negotiation of interfaith relations. The codes were synthesized into broader themes that revealed patterns of message delivery, identity preservation, and strategies of impression management. To illustrate these patterns,

thematic matrices and tables were constructed, while narrative descriptions provided the interpretive depth needed to connect field findings with theoretical perspectives.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, the study employed several validation strategies. Triangulation was achieved by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentary sources. Member checking was carried out by discussing preliminary interpretations with selected informants to ensure accuracy and fairness. Peer debriefing with academic colleagues further strengthened the reliability of the coding process and the thematic structure of the analysis. These measures collectively ensured that the findings were not merely descriptive but analytically robust.

Through this methodological process, the study was able to portray dramaturgical *da'wah* as a lived practice that unfolds across multiple social arenas, while also remaining faithful to the voices and experiences of Muslim minority communicators in Nias. The combination of qualitative depth, ethical sensitivity, and theoretical integration allowed the research to capture *da'wah* as both an act of faith and a strategy of intercultural negotiation in a plural society (Walidin et al., 2023).

Ethical considerations were strictly followed throughout the research process. Before data collection, this study received ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol, Padang, Sumatera Barat, ensuring that all procedures complied with established ethical standards. All participants were informed about the aims of the study, and their consent was obtained before interviews and observations were conducted. To protect confidentiality, names were anonymized, and sensitive details that could potentially disrupt interfaith harmony were excluded from direct reporting. Respect for religious sensitivities was prioritized, ensuring that the research process itself did not contribute to social tension.

C. Results and Discussion

This section presents the field findings along with the analysis obtained through the research process. The presentation of the results is not



merely intended to describe empirical facts, but also to demonstrate how the dramaturgical concept truly takes shape in the daily practices of *da'wah* within the life of Muslim minorities. The data collected from in-depth interviews and direct observations serve as an essential foundation for understanding how religious communicators manage messages, adapt to social contexts, and build interactions within a plural society. Furthermore, these research findings are closely linked to the theoretical framework previously established, so that the analysis does not remain at a purely descriptive level but advances toward a more in-depth interpretative dimension. In this way, the subsequent discussion is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the concepts, practices, success factors, and impacts of dramaturgical *da'wah* strategies, while at the same time demonstrating their relevance to broader academic discourse and the dynamics of inter-religious communication in multicultural societies.

1. Results

a. The conception of dramaturgical *da'wah*

Da'wah, as an effort to convey religious messages, has manifested in various forms within society. One particularly compelling form is *da'wah* dramaturgy. The concept of *da'wah* dramaturgy views *da'wah* interactions as theatrical performances, wherein the *da'i* (preacher) acts as a strategic performer engaged in impression management on the social stage. In the context of Muslim minority populations, this strategy emphasizes the contextualization of religious messages through the management of frontstage elements—such as appearance, setting, and behavior in public or predominantly non-Muslim spaces—to construct a positive image and reduce perceived threats. Conversely, the backstage refers to authentic preparation within the internal Muslim community. The overarching goal is to deconstruct extremist perceptions of Islam and foster social acceptance by presenting its universal values. This approach serves as a critical response to the complexities of religious communication in pluralistic societies. The conceptual framework of *da'wah* dramaturgy is outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The conception of dramaturgical da'wah

No.	Interview Data	Description	Code
1.	Ustadz (Al Washliyah and NU Organization): <i>"We deliberately avoid delivering messages directed at the Christian community and instead emphasize messages promoting interreligious harmony"</i> .	The <i>da'wah</i> message is conveyed without offending the core teachings of other religions to maintain interreligious harmony.	Front stage
2.	Ustadz and administrators of Muhammadiyah stated: <i>"In our view, extending greetings to Christian communities is permissible"</i> .	The <i>da'wah</i> message permits Muslims to extend greetings to Christians, even though this practice contradicts the fatwa issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI).	Front stage
3.	(Al-Washliyah Religious Leaders and Preachers): <i>"The messages delivered during the monthly Majelis Ta'lim gatherings focus on strengthening faith (aqidah), understanding of the Qur'an, belief, and moral character"</i> .	The content of the <i>da'wah</i> message centers on matters of faith and the strengthening of Islamic creed	Back stage
4.	Muhammadiyah Preacher and Administrator: <i>"When delivering religious lectures to the congregation, we emphasize the concepts of halal and haram in Islam, which are naturally distinct from Christian teachings"</i> .	The content of the religious message emphasized that the consumption of pork is prohibited, particularly for those who have converted to Islam (muallaf) or are already Muslim.	Back stage

Sources: The Researchers Compilation, 2024

Table 1 presents data on the concept of dramaturgical-based *da'wah*, which illustrates the patterns of delivering *da'wah* messages by religious communicators. There are two forms of communication carried out by religious communicators in conveying *da'wah* messages. First, the *da'wah* message in the public domain, or what is referred to as the front stage, is delivered by selecting messages that avoid division and conflict between minorities and majorities. This is due to, on the front stage, religious preaching will be received by a public predominantly consisting of non-Muslims. Second, on the backstage, *da'wah* messages are conveyed within the domestic realm, choosing messages for the reinforcement of the internalization of Islamic faith.

These messages are more exclusive, specifically aimed at Muslims, and aim to deepen their understanding of Islamic teachings. For example, the reinforcement of faith related to theological concepts and rituals, such as worship and Islamic law. On the back stage, religious communicators can deliver messages more freely, messages that might not be able to be conveyed in public spaces due to the risk of offending the beliefs of other religions.

From the description above, it is clear that in the dramaturgical *da'wah* strategy, the front stage focuses more on universal values such as mutual respect, cooperation, and interfaith tolerance. This religious message is delivered using inclusive language and an approach that emphasizes shared human values such as justice, empathy, and peace, which can be accepted by various groups, including non-Muslims. This strategy is crucial for building interfaith dialogue, strengthening social relationships, and reducing the potential for conflicts that may arise due to differences in beliefs. This implies that the religious message conveyed on the front stage emphasizes solidarity and avoids exclusivity.

Meanwhile, *da'wah* on the back stage tends to focus more on religious instruction that emphasizes the reinforcement of faith among Muslim minorities. The content delivered is more exclusive in nature, including discussions on faith (*iman*), ethics (*akhlaq*), creed (*aqeedah*), and Islamic legal matters related to what is halal and haram, which distinguish Islam from other religions. The delivery of *da'wah* content on the back stage serves as a space for the internalization of Islamic values, aiming to preserve the integrity of *aqeedah* without disrupting social harmony with non-Muslims. This model of *da'wah* demonstrates an adaptive and selective strategy that enables Muslim minorities to remain firm in their beliefs while maintaining harmony and avoiding social friction.

The delivery strategy of *da'wah* messages across the two performance zones—front stage and backstage—is consistently implemented by religious communicators based on the principle of message balance. The front-stage zone prioritizes external interfaith interactions, aiming to foster humanistic harmony within minority Muslim contexts. In contrast, the backstage *da'wah*

messages are oriented toward safeguarding the internal consolidation of faith among Muslim minorities.

This *da'wah dramaturgy* strategy aligns with Hall's findings. (Peacock, 1971; Sabella & Hall, 1978) which emphasize that effective communication must be adapted to cultural contexts. In multicultural settings, the use of high-context communication (where meanings are embedded in context rather than explicitly stated) in public spaces represents a form of communicative intelligence aimed at minimizing conflict. Conversely, low-context communication (in which meanings are made explicit through verbal language) is employed in private settings to maintain the clarity and doctrinal integrity of religious teachings.

b. The practice of dramaturgical da'wah: factors of success

The measure of a religious communicator's success in *da'wah* activities lies in their ability to facilitate transformation and empowerment within the Muslim community. The changes that occur extend across all levels—individual, group, and societal—moving toward an ideal condition in both public and domestic spheres. In order to achieve such a transformation, the communicator must demonstrate effectiveness in implementing the practice of dramaturgical *da'wah*. The success factors in dramaturgical *da'wah* encompass various aspects, which can be identified as follows:

Table 2. The practice of dramaturgical da'wah: Key success factors

No.	Interview Data/ Observation	Description	Code
1.	NU preacher: "The preacher consistently attends government-organized religious events, even when these events are attended by interfaith leaders or feature non-Muslim symbols such as the cross".	The message design of religious communicators is adapted to an interfaith audience during joint activities.	Segmented delivery methods.
2.	NU preacher: "Exchanging gifts, attending weddings, and delivering interfaith lectures are efforts to preserve Nias cultural traditions".	Preserving local traditions through the exchange of gifts, attendance at weddings, and the delivery of interfaith lectures.	Cultural adaptation

No.	Interview Data/ Observation	Description	Code
3.	A Banser leader and the head of a theological school: <i>"The guarding of churches by Banser during Christmas celebrations reflects a strong commitment to safeguarding the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), fostering a sense of security among Christian communities, and encouraging reciprocal support for Islamic community activities"</i> .	Mutual assistance in Islamic and Christian religious activities is considered permissible.	Displaying the image of Islam as peaceful.
4.	The Pastor and Head of the Nias Theological School: <i>"The ulema, in addition to being requested to teach about Islam, also deliver lectures on religious moderation at Christian schools"</i> .	The ulema teach Islam and religious moderation at Christian schools.	Open to interfaith dialogue.

Sources: The Researchers Compilation, 2024

Table 2 illustrates that the success of dramaturgical *da'wah* practiced by minority Muslim religious communicators can be attributed to several factors. First is the ability to employ segmented delivery methods in different social spaces. In this context, religious communicators analyze the audience's social, cultural, and religious backgrounds before conveying the message. Messages delivered in public forums with multicultural audiences tend to focus on universal values such as harmony, justice, and interfaith cooperation, making them more acceptable and less likely to provoke resistance. This approach allows *da'wah* to be conducted more effectively without disrupting social harmony, as potentially sensitive or controversial messages are reserved for the backstage (private/ domestic sphere) and are not presented in the frontstage (public sphere).

Second, the ability of religious communicators to demonstrate cultural adaptation—by adjusting *da'wah* methods to the cultural characteristics of Nias Island—is a key factor in the success of dramaturgical *da'wah*. In this context, religious communicators are required to understand and respect local cultural values, such as traditions of preserving customs

through gift-giving and attending wedding ceremonies, even when they involve people of different faiths. Aligning with local customs allows them to convey religious messages in ways that not only remain consistent with Islamic teachings but are also harmonious with cultural practices that hold significance for the community.

Third, projecting a peaceful image of Islam is another crucial factor. In this context, religious communicators in Nias strive to portray Islam as a religion that promotes peace, tolerance, and compassion—both in everyday life and in interfaith interactions. For instance, the messages conveyed by these communicators include encouraging Muslims to assist in Christian religious events, and likewise, permitting Christians to support Islamic activities. This mutual support highlights a core principle that Islam is not an exclusive religion, but one that upholds values of peace and harmony among religious communities.

Fourth, openness to interfaith dialogue is a significant factor contributing to the success of dramaturgical *da'wah*. In this context, religious communicators in Nias create opportunities for open communication between Muslims and non-Muslims to foster mutual understanding and respect for religious differences. This dialogue often occurs through meaningful social interactions—for instance, the willingness of Muslim religious leaders in Nias not only to teach Islam in Christian schools but also to deliver lectures on religious moderation at events organized by those schools. Such actions demonstrate a genuine openness to dialogue and the sharing of religious knowledge, unhindered by doctrinal differences.

Among the four factors contributing to the successful practice of dramaturgical *da'wah*, challenges and resistance remain from other Muslim communities who express concern over the condition of the Muslim minority in Nias Island. Such concerns are not unfounded, particularly about preserving the purity of Islamic values in the region. As noted by one informant, identified as (AF), a Salafi *da'wah* group once implemented an exclusive preaching model; however, the majority of the Nias community rejected this approach.



c. The expected and achieved outcomes of dramaturgical da'wah

The impact of religious communicators implementing the concept of *da'wah* through a dramaturgical approach in a multi-ethnic and multi-faith society has resulted in a peaceful atmosphere within the Nias Island community. One notable success is the projection of Islam as a peaceful religion. This achievement has contributed to reaching a more ideal societal condition. Therefore, the expected and achieved outcomes of dramaturgical *da'wah* can be described as follows:

Table 3. The Expected and achieved outcomes of dramaturgical *da'wah*

No.	Interview Data / Observation	Description	Code
1.	Reverend and Ustadz: <i>"Muslims and non-Muslims participate in activities related to Christmas, New Year, the Qur'an Recitation Competition (MTQ), and Eid al-Adha..."</i>	Active involvement in Inter-ethnic activities.	Building social awareness.
2.	Observation: In Nias, there are both Christian and Islamic schools, and Minangkabau entrepreneurs employ Christian Nias employees.	Equal Access to education and social services.	Building social awareness.
3.	Observation: The mosque plays Quran recitations on cassette before dawn, while the church plays sermons after dawn.	Islamic religious broadcasts take place in the morning before dawn, followed by Christian broadcasts after dawn.	Maintaining harmony among religious communities.
4.	Interview agreement between the Reverend and Ustadz: <i>"I permit the use of the mosque's loudspeaker for the broadcast of Taraweeh prayers"</i> .	<i>Tarawih</i> prayers are allowed to use the loudspeaker.	Maintaining harmony among religious communities.
5.	Interview with Congregation: <i>"I am involved in a social organization and maintain brotherhood despite religious differences"</i> .	Maintaining unity among citizens of different ethnicities within one social organisation.	Character transformation.
6.	Interview: Irvan Zebua: <i>"The Nias ethnic group</i>	Providing spatial planning and location for	Character transformation.

No.	Interview Data / Observation	Description	Code
	provides land for Muslims as a place of residence". "Gawa soa nuwa" means immigrants who have their own village.	each ethnic group, including the minority Muslim community.	

Sources: The Researchers Compilation, 2024

Table 3 provides a general overview indicating that *da'wah dramaturgy* plays a significant role in bridging differences, reducing conflict, and strengthening the values of tolerance, thereby serving as an effective instrument for constructive social change. The outcomes achieved extend beyond successful communication; they also involve the transformation of society toward more harmonious living, exemplified by the emergence of social awareness. This is evident in several key aspects, such as the rise of interethnic engagement activities that foster interaction and collaboration among diverse community groups. In this context, there is also an increased public sensitivity toward equitable access to educational and social services, regardless of religious or ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, the emerging social awareness is reflected in the development of more inclusive economic cooperation, which is no longer based on shared religious identity but rather on mutual benefit and the collective pursuit of shared prosperity.

In addition to social awareness, the impact resulting from the dramaturgical preaching strategy has contributed to maintaining interfaith harmony. For example, there have been social regulations that accommodate the freedom of worship for followers of each religion. One such policy is the use of loudspeakers with specific regulations to prevent disturbances to the surrounding environment, as well as the Islamic and Christian religious calls in the morning, which are carried out at different times to avoid potential conflicts.

The formation of social awareness to maintain interfaith harmony as a result of the dramaturgical preaching practice has contributed to shaping the transformation of community character. One concrete manifestation of this



change is the preservation of unity among people of different ethnic backgrounds within a single social organization. This has made the values of brotherhood more inclusive, without barriers of ethnic and religious differences. As a result, the community continues to maintain the bond of brotherhood despite differing beliefs. This is evident in the spatial planning policy that provides locations for each ethnic group, including the minority Muslim community, to carry out their social and religious activities without discrimination. Therefore, the impact of dramaturgical preaching is not only as a medium for spreading Islamic teachings but also as a catalyst for more inclusive and just social change.

Of the three aspects related to the anticipated impacts of dramaturgical *da'wah*, the findings indicate that religious communicators have engaged in effective communication. Such effectiveness stems from their ability to understand the values and norms of local culture, grasp the community's mindset, and draw upon experiences of interaction within the minority Muslim context. Indicators of effective intercultural and interreligious communication are reflected in the shared assumption of mutual understanding across cultural differences, coupled with an emphasis on empathetic communication to preserve the continuity of coexistence among community members.

2. Discussion

This study reveals that dramaturgical *da'wah* constitutes an effective framework for understanding and practicing religious communication in Muslim minority contexts, particularly in societies marked by pluralism and multiculturalism. The central premise is that *da'wah*, when conceptualized through dramaturgical performance, becomes a process of impression management in which religious communicators navigate between frontstage and backstage arenas, selecting messages appropriate to each context. The findings from Nias demonstrate that this strategy has enabled religious leaders not only to preserve their religious identity but also to actively foster interreligious harmony, thereby strengthening the social position of Muslims in a predominantly Christian environment. The frontstage emphasizes inclusivity

and universal values, while the backstage secures internal doctrinal strength. This two-tiered approach highlights the complex negotiations that occur in minority settings and offers a more nuanced perspective compared to binary models of exclusivity versus accommodation (Robinson & Schulz, 2016; Trysnes & Synnes, 2022; Urick, 2014; Goffman, 2017; Scheibe & Barrett, 2017).

The strategy of contextualizing *da'wah* messages in Nias reflects an adaptive response to the realities of religious plurality. Unlike confrontational preaching that risks triggering tensions and social backlash, dramaturgical *da'wah* prioritizes dialogue, cultural sensitivity, and mutual respect (Robinson & Schulz, 2016; Scheibe & Barrett, 2017). This approach resonates with the principle that effective religious communication must be grounded in the cultural and social logic of the audience, as articulated by Hall's theory of high-context and low-context communication (Peacock, 1971; Sabella & Hall, 1978; Taufik & Taufik, 2023). In Nias, frontstage performances employ high-context communication, embedding messages in symbols and cultural practices shared across communities, while backstage communication emphasizes explicit instruction on matters of creed and Islamic law. This balance allows religious leaders to avoid unnecessary confrontation while maintaining theological clarity within the Muslim community. Such strategies align with intercultural communication studies, which argue that religious engagement in minority environments must simultaneously navigate inclusivity and identity reinforcement (Weismann, 2019; Sohrabi & Farquharson, 2016).

The adaptability demonstrated by religious communicators in Nias also underscores the importance of segmented delivery methods and cultural adaptation as success factors in dramaturgical *da'wah*. Segmenting audiences enables communicators to avoid imposing sensitive doctrinal content in pluralistic spaces, while cultural adaptation allows them to integrate Islamic teachings with local traditions in ways that foster acceptance. For example, the practices of attending interfaith events, exchanging gifts, and safeguarding Christian celebrations reveal how *da'wah* becomes embedded in local cultural norms, creating mutual trust and social reciprocity (Kalista et al., 2024;



Saefulloh, 2021; Barus et al., 2024). These practices illustrate that the projection of Islam as a peaceful religion is not merely rhetorical but is enacted through concrete social actions, consistent with previous findings that highlight the transformative potential of moderate *da'wah* strategies in Indonesia and beyond (Thaib, 2020; Turki et al., 2025; Yusuf et al., 2025).

The transformational impact of dramaturgical *da'wah* in Nias is evident in the creation of social awareness, interfaith harmony, and character transformation at the community level. Muslims and Christians participate together in social and religious activities, such as Christmas and Eid celebrations, demonstrating that *da'wah* extends beyond proselytization into fostering collective identity and solidarity. This transformation is also reflected in the equitable access to education, employment, and social services, as well as in cooperative arrangements such as regulated loudspeaker use for religious activities. These practices exemplify a practical realization of interfaith coexistence, where religious diversity does not become a source of conflict but rather an opportunity for social collaboration (Guleng et al., 2019; Rufai, 2012). The dramaturgical approach thus situates *da'wah* not only as a theological obligation but also as a civic endeavor contributing to inclusive and harmonious community life.

Theoretically, this study advances the discourse by moving beyond the binary framing of Muslim minority *da'wah*, which typically oscillates between exclusivist assertion of Islamic identity and accommodative dilution of that identity (Amin, 2022; Elmasry, 2010; Kadir, 2021; Karimullah et al., 2023; Kuiper, 2017; Sorgenfrei, 2021). By conceptualizing *da'wah* as dramaturgical performance, this research shows that Muslim minorities are not passive actors caught between two extremes but active negotiators who strategically adjust their performances according to context. This conceptual innovation aligns with recent global scholarship that has begun to highlight adaptive strategies among Muslim minorities, such as the reinterpretation of European societies from Dar al-Harb to Dar al-Da'wah or Dar al-Shahada (De Angelo, 2013; Aidonojie et al., 2025). Such redefinitions challenge confrontational paradigms and instead reframe minority existence as an

opportunity for partnership and testimony of faith (Zulkarnain M & Syawaluddin, 2023). Dramaturgical *da'wah*, therefore, contributes to the epistemic shift that reimagines Muslim minorities as moral partners rather than threatened communities.

The comparative global evidence further strengthens the significance of dramaturgical *da'wah* as a universal strategy. In Germany, Salafism has shifted from confrontational street mobilization to institutional adaptation within the legal framework, illustrating how *da'wah* responds to state regulations by professionalizing and institutionalizing its practices (Emmerich, 2023). In the United Kingdom, the stigmatization of Salafism after 9/11 catalyzed the emergence of digital counterpublics, such as Islam21C, which foster solidarity across ideological divides and resist Islamophobia (Dawood, 2024; Ishak & Mikea Manitra, 2022). These cases demonstrate that adaptation is not merely a local necessity but a global trend in Muslim minority contexts. The dramaturgical lens helps explain these shifts as forms of impression management tailored to changing social and political environments.

The experiences of Muslim minorities in Asia and Africa also resonate with the dramaturgical model. In Southern Thailand, the hijab has been reframed as both a revivalist symbol and a tool of social integration, reflecting how religious symbols can function as both markers of identity and bridges to broader society (Pollachom et al., 2022). In South Africa, functional specialization has emerged between *da'wah* movements and Sufi tariqahs, with the former excelling in social activism and the latter in spiritual production and media influence (Haron, 2005). In Singapore, Muslim women have utilized digital platforms to establish informal authority, thereby expanding the scope of *da'wah* beyond traditional male-dominated structures (Jamil, 2016). These examples illustrate how dramaturgical strategies are not limited to impression management in interfaith relations but also encompass gendered and institutional negotiations of authority.

Within this global framework, the case of Nias illustrates the universality of dramaturgical adaptation while also highlighting its



limitations. On one hand, the segmentation of frontstage and backstage preaching reflects a successful strategy for balancing inclusivity and identity preservation. On the other hand, it also exposes religious communicators to internal criticism, particularly from conservative factions that view such adaptation as compromising doctrinal purity. Accusations of syncretism in Nias mirror suspicions of “sharia infiltration” in Europe, demonstrating that dramaturgical strategies, while effective externally, may create internal tensions within Muslim communities (Gugler, 2009; Rufai, 2012). This dilemma underscores the delicate balance between authenticity and adaptation, a balance that minority religious communicators must continuously negotiate.

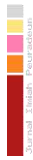
The risks inherent in dramaturgical *da'wah* point to the need for institutional support and policy frameworks that empower religious leaders to operate effectively in plural societies. Training programs that enhance communicators' dramaturgical competence—particularly their ability to use inclusive symbols and language without diluting theological identity—are essential for sustaining harmony. Policy development that encourages the adoption of culturally universal symbols can also serve as an important tool for bridging divides across religious and cultural communities. These recommendations are consistent with broader calls in *da'wah* studies for strategies that emphasize moderation, inclusivity, and social responsibility (Prasetiawan, 2021; Thaib, 2020; Yusuf et al., 2025).

This study's contribution is therefore twofold. At the theoretical level, it enriches *da'wah* and intercultural communication studies by proposing dramaturgical *da'wah* as a performative framework that transcends dichotomous models. At the practical level, it provides a roadmap for minority Muslim communities to negotiate identity and social relations in ways that preserve both authenticity and harmony. The Nias case demonstrates that *da'wah* can serve simultaneously as a tool of religious transmission and as a civic strategy for social transformation. By situating this local experience within global trajectories, the study underscores the

universality of dramaturgical adaptation and its relevance for understanding Muslim minority strategies across diverse contexts.

Finally, this study affirms that dramaturgical *da'wah* operates as a long-term cultural project that transcends national and regional boundaries. As minority communities continue to face pressures from globalization, state policies, and internal debates, dramaturgical strategies provide them with the flexibility to navigate these challenges while preserving their religious identity. The tension between adaptation and authenticity will remain a persistent challenge, but it is precisely in this tension that innovation and creativity emerge. Religious communicators in Nias, much like their counterparts in Europe, Africa, and Southeast Asia, embody the resilience of Muslim minorities who strive to sustain their faith while contributing positively to plural societies. By framing *da'wah* as performance, this study not only advances academic theory but also provides practical insights for policymakers, religious institutions, and community leaders seeking to foster inclusive and harmonious futures. Beyond the local context of Nias, the implications of this research resonate with broader global debates on how Muslim minorities negotiate their faith and identity in plural societies. The dramaturgical framework developed in this study therefore should not be seen merely as a contextual strategy but as a transferable model that contributes to international scholarship on minority religious communication.

The global impact of this study lies in its demonstration that dramaturgical *da'wah* is not confined to the specific socio-religious context of Nias but offers a transferable framework for Muslim minority communities across the world. By conceptualizing *da'wah* as a staged performance with differentiated frontstage and backstage arenas, this approach provides religious communicators with a model of balancing inclusivity and authenticity in multicultural societies. Such a framework is particularly relevant in Europe, where Muslims continue to grapple with identity politics and integration debates (De Angelo, 2013; Emmerich, 2023), in Africa, where *da'wah* movements navigate interreligious cooperation alongside doctrinal preservation (Haron, 2005), and in Southeast Asia, where cultural hybridity



challenges traditional preaching models (Pollachom et al., 2022; Jamil, 2016). By situating Nias within these global dynamics, the study affirms that dramaturgical strategies can serve as a universal tool for religious minorities seeking to negotiate their place in plural societies.

This contribution expands the theoretical horizon of *da'wah* studies by reframing minority religious communication as a global phenomenon of performative adaptation. The findings suggest that minority Muslim communities worldwide can adopt dramaturgical approaches to avoid the binary trap of exclusivity versus accommodation, instead embracing contextual adaptation without compromising authenticity. In doing so, this study positions dramaturgical *da'wah* as both a practical and theoretical innovation with implications for religious leadership training, intercultural policy development, and interfaith dialogue on a global scale. It demonstrates that insights derived from a local case study in Nias have the potential to enrich the global scholarly conversation on Muslim minorities, offering a replicable model of religious communication that is adaptive, dialogical, and sustainable.

Although this study has successfully provided an in-depth understanding of dramaturgical *da'wah* strategies among Muslim minority communities in Nias, several limitations should be acknowledged. *First*, the study is contextual and limited to a single geographic location, which means that generalizing the findings to other contexts requires caution. *Second*, the qualitative approach used relies on the narratives of selected actors, thereby not capturing the full diversity of minority *da'wah* practices at the national level. *Third*, this research has not explored in greater depth how non-Muslim audiences respond to the frontstage *da'wah* strategies employed, which is essential to assess the effectiveness of message delivery from the recipient's perspective. Therefore, future research should consider cross-regional exploration and the integration of perspectives from non-Muslim communities to enrich the understanding of the social and theological impacts of this approach.

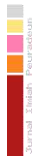
D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that dramaturgical *da'wah* provides an effective and adaptive framework for Muslim minorities in navigating multiethnic and multireligious contexts. The findings reveal that the practice of separating communication into frontstage and backstage arenas allows religious communicators to maintain doctrinal authenticity while fostering inclusive interfaith relations. This dual strategy enables Muslim minorities, such as in Nias, to preserve their identity and at the same time contribute to social harmony and collective transformation in plural societies.

The main contribution of this research lies in advancing *da'wah* studies and intercultural communication theory by integrating dramaturgical performance as an analytical lens. Theoretically, this study enriches academic discourse by offering a two-arena model that highlights impression management as a determinant of success in religious communication, thereby moving beyond the binary approaches of exclusivity or accommodation that dominate previous studies. Practically, the findings provide guidance for policymakers, *da'wah* institutions, and religious leaders to design messages that are inclusive, culturally sensitive, and contextually adaptive. The novelty of this research lies in positioning dramaturgical *da'wah* as a model of minority communication that is both locally grounded and globally relevant.

Future research should expand this inquiry by examining other Muslim minority communities across different cultural and national settings to test the applicability of dramaturgical *da'wah* as a universal framework. Comparative studies involving regions in Europe, Africa, and Southeast Asia would provide deeper insights into the similarities and variations in how minority communities negotiate identity through religious communication. Methodological innovations, such as ethnography of communication or social identity theory, could also enrich the analysis of how dramaturgical strategies are enacted and contested in diverse contexts.

This study affirms that dramaturgical *da'wah* is not merely a contextual response to the challenges of Muslim minorities in Nias but a broader



contribution to the global discourse on religious communication. Its emphasis on balancing authenticity with inclusivity offers a transferable model for minority religious communities worldwide. The take-home message is that *da'wah*, when framed as a performative act of impression management, becomes more than a vehicle for transmitting theology; it evolves into a strategic and dialogical process that sustains identity, nurtures harmony, and strengthens the role of religion as a constructive force in plural societies.

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