

# Religious Expression in Coastal Area of Muslim Society West Papua

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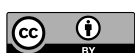
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**Abstract:** This research focuses on *da'i* (Muslim preacher) absence during Ramadhan at Darussalam Mosque Kampung Pisang that affects its *da'wah* (preaching) activity schedule. The activity meant here is a routine Islamic preaching which is scheduled every night during Ramadhan by Sorong Ministry of Religious Affairs. The researcher appoints three problems to discuss: what are the reasons behind *da'i* absence during Ramadhan at Darussalam Mosque Kampung Pisang, how the attendees (*mad'u*) respond to the absence and how Ministry of Religious Affairs deals with it. The type of this research is qualitative research. The data are collected from researcher interview with subjected primary informants; they are Darussalam Mosque Kampung Pisang committee, the listed *da'i/mubaligh* on schedule, the attendees (*mad'u*) and Ministry of Religious Affairs for scheduling matters. The researcher also conducts a direct observation on the primary informants. This research finding is significant enough to base any related party who attempt to cope with similar problem.

**Keyword:** *Da'i* and their personality, *da'i* absence reason, Ministry of Religious Affairs attempt

## 1. Introduction

Islam is a religion of *da'wah* which is understood as a religion that encourages the believers to actively practicing *da'wah*. Its urgency even holds the fate of Muslims and Al-Qur'an named it as *Ahsanu Qaulan* for securing a high and noble position in Muslims evolution [1]. When it comes to *da'wah*, Muslims are strongly advised to prioritize it among other concerns. In Islam, *da'wah* is being depicted as the spirit of life, Islam will have no massive promulgation such as today without it [2]. *Da'wah* is also regarded as a continuity of process in motivating Muslims to keep carrying out *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (ordering right and prohibiting wrong) which indirectly influence both individual and social personality for a better change [3].



*Da'wah* requires full support from its components or elements to precede smoothly, namely subject, object, material and media, and fine method. The latter should be considered more. *Da'wah* methodology is *da'i* preference way in delivering their speech. It is really important for every *da'i* to adopt a good and suitable method in performing *da'wah* otherwise its message may not be well-received by the recipients [4.]. Generally, *da'wah* is divided by three: oral (*da'wah bi al-lisan*), written (*da'wah bi al-qalam*) and action (*da'wah bi al-qalam*). Every method has its own positive and negative traits where *da'i* has to adjust it in correspond to each situation and condition. However, a perfect method does not always come with a perfect result since methodology is not the only key to succeed. Its five elements; *da'i*, *mad'u*, material, method and media is a joint system in performing *da'wah*. Hence, a successful *da'wah* really depends on each elements role [5]

Oral *da'wah* (*da'wah bi al-lisan*) is preaching with the use of oral media, such as speech, *khutbah* (regular Islamic sermon), *tausiyah* (informal *da'wah*), *pengajian* (*da'wah* arranged by a group of people with common interest), Islamic formal education, lecture, discussion, seminar, advising, visiting among Muslims, etc. Speech is the most common method applied by *da'i* in preaching and very popular among society because its simplicity and does not require much effort and expense. This method is easily found on Friday sermon, routine *da'wah*, pilgrimage ceremony, events such as wedding, celebration and Islamic Days Commemoration.

Speech is also delivered after daily prayer in mosque, *musholla* (prayer room) or *surau* (smaller mosque) to strengthen Muslims' faith which often weakened by days. The speech is expected to help Muslims in maintaining and escalating their faith. Nevertheless, oral *da'wah* has several weaknesses such as the *da'i* absence in the designated place. Indeed, the speech would not be performed and *mad'u* wouldn't receive the intended messages. Although *da'wah* activity has been facilitated by various media such as newspaper, magazine, short story, pictorial story, vinyl record, cassette, film, radio, television, sticker, painting, advertisement, stage show, poetry, songs, music and another art media, yet *da'wah* in speech method is still highly demanded by society apart from how sophisticated the technology has been developed, *silaturahmi* (demonstration of friendship in Islam by visiting or seeing each other) or our presence to gather and socialize is irreplaceable by any means of media.

Kathleen A. Begley stated that face to face communication is man's most influential interaction. Even advance electronic devices fail to recreate people's intimacy that emerging from a meeting. Numerous experts believe that best communication happens when the speaker and listener share the same room [6] It proves that the most effective communication only happens when people see each other in real life [7]

It is important to know how to communicate well. One of communication forms that should be paid attention more is verbal communication because it is always used to send messages that are intended to other people. The knowledge of verbal communication should be mastered by all people, especially *da'i* or Islamic preachers who are actively involved in Islamic preaching. Many of them deliver Islamic teaching by using verbal communication. To attract people to accept the messages and to avoid misunderstanding that may occur during the communication process, a *da'i* must know how to communicate verbally well with others, particularly with the people who come from different background such as cultures, education, characters and ages [8]

Particularly in Sorong, speech is the most familiar method applied by *da'i* and gains great attention from the locals. This method does not demand the preacher to possess a certain skill in performing though some are really skillful. *Da'i* has always been increasing in number both from local resident and migrants. They show their interest in becoming one. This phenomenon is considered by Muslims in Sorong as a great achievement in Islam expansion since Christianity dominates the area.

Ministry of Religion Affairs responds to this positive progress by enlisting the preachers' name to give them wider range in performing *da'wah* and chance to learn from their attendants (*mad'u*) whose ethnics, races, cultures, and conditions are distinct. However, this program is only applicable when the preacher is presence. Otherwise, the intended messages and advices fail to reach the listeners since the speech before *tarawih* prayers is not performed as scheduled.

There are only a few preachers who deliver their speech at Darussalam Mosque Kampung Pisang every Ramadhan. Geographically, Darussalam Mosque located in Sorong downtown and is close to Al-Akbar Grand Mosque, the biggest mosque and Islamic center in Sorong. Based on the researcher's observation, Al-Akbar Mosque is rarely experiencing the same problem, even the committees often has some preachers invited from other regions. It is contradictory to either Darussalam Mosque or other mosques in Sorong.

## 2. Method

This phenomenon is worth to be analyzed considering the nature of *da'wah* itself; encouraging fellow Muslims to the faith. The fact that it happens during Ramadhan, which is believed as a holy, noble and merciful month when Muslims suppose to devote themselves in doing good deeds is interesting enough to be analyzed because the same problem tends to happen as well on the rest of the months. Based on the previous explanation, there are three problems that need to be discussed: First, what are the reasons behind *da'i* absence during Ramadhan at Darussalam Mosque Kampung Pisang, how the attendants (*mad'u*) respond to the absence and how Ministry of Religious Affair deals with the absence.

This research will apply qualitative research. It concerns with a descriptive data derived from the research subjects in the form of utterances and words on a certain scientific context which is depicted by scientific methodology. It is also meant to holistically comprehend the subjects' behavior, perception, motivation, action, etc. The research will take place at Darussalam Mosque Kampung Pisang, Maleo Street RT01/Rw01 Remu Village Sorong District. The mosque was built in 1975 on 269 sq ft area, lead by H. Arsyad dan Imam La maege. It accommodated only small number of Muslims at that time, around 40 people. Reconstructions were done twice, in 1987 and 2000 and now it is a home for about 300 Muslims under H. Sutastikno rule as the committee leader and Imam Irianto, S.Pd.I and Dadang as Imam (the leader of a mosque).

The subjects for this research involved the routine *da'wah* which is conducted at night during Ramadhan at Darussalam Mosque Kampung Pisang, the preachers (*da'i*), the mosque committee, attendants (*mad'u*) and the Ministry. The data are collected by interview and observation. Subjects for the interview are the primer informants, namely the mosque committee, the attendants (*mad'u*), the listed preachers on Ministry data, and *Da'wah* Scheduling Department at Ministry of Religious Affair. Observation is the significant part in qualitative method since researcher directly involves in it and obtains a wider angle about the problems. Researcher also participated in *Isya* and *Tarawih* prayers at Darussalam

Mosque when the speech should be delivered before it began. Additionally, researcher also notes some details regarding the problems. The data are being analyzed once every datum is collected continuously. There are two steps in analyzing the data; first, classifying and describing: researcher explains the observation and interview result in written form. Second, researcher interprets the collected data based on the research focus.

### 3. Discussion

According to researcher's observation and interview with the preachers, committee and attendants at Darussalam Mosque, some factors behind da'I absence are revealed.

#### 1) *Mudik (Returning to hometown)*

The word *mudik* is originated from Javanese. It stands for *Mulik Dilik* meaning going home for a while. This activity is very common among migrants who usually leaving for home during or before major holidays. Most Indonesian is going for *mudik* on certain occasions such as school holiday, religious holiday and Ramadhan for Muslims. The latter occasion has the longest duration apart for the two. Therefore, migrant workers have to organize their tasks wisely to prevent any issues happen during their holiday.

Apparently, the preachers also wish to leave for their hometown in Ramadhan. Moreover, most of them are migrants from Sumatra, Jawa, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, Maluku, etc. Their longing for home and family is apprehensible, especially for the bachelor preachers who are leaving their family back home, yet such personal issue should not have disrupted their duty. Ministry of Religious Affair has regularly issued a schedule with date and designated mosques for each da'I, where they have to perform *da'wah* before Tarawih prayers during Ramadhan. However, they were absence because leaving for home without contacting the Ministry for a replacement or solution.

In this case, the preachers are responsible not only to himself but foremost to the attendants for their absence. The intended messages fail to deliver because their lack of commitment, a manner that a *da'i* must not possessed. The real situation where the researcher conducts the observation presents the same fact; the preachers do not notice both the Ministry and the Mosque committee for their absence before leaving.

#### 2) *Complying another task*

When the preachers have another duty to be complied at the same time, they would not be at Darussalam Mosque as planned. For example, a *da'i* is previously scheduled to deliver their *da'wah* while he or she is appointed for being an Imam, a leader who responsible for every activity at Mosque, whose presence and contribution is a must.

*Da'i* usually meets the requirement to be nominated as an Imam, the ability to read Al-Qur'an fluently, among Muslims in their neighborhood. Thus, they made a choice by complying one of the tasks he assigned to. Occasionally, they contact their available colleagues for a replacement or IKADI Sorong (Ikatan *Da'i* / *da'i* Organization) to help them find a substitute.

### 3) *Small Allowance (Infaq)*

Financial stability plays a critical role in life. It provides an overview of a good and stable life which facilitates them in covering the daily expenses. Its urgency often motivates people to work harder or enslave them. Once the preachers prioritize more on how much money they will earn in performing *da'wah* and preferably attend to where the allowance is good, they have violated code of ethics for professional *da'i* (Yusuf, 2013: 21). A *da'i* should not place his *da'wah* over money since it is their duty to actively encourage fellow Muslims to the faith. The allowance here is labeled as *al-Ujrah ala ath-thaah*, means receiving reward for task accomplishment. In fact, there is no objection for *da'i* accepting the allowance to make for his life or paying their operational fund. This tricky problem needs to be accommodated by Muslims by giving them sufficient appreciation called *Kontraprestasi* (Consideration) in the form of allowance or social [9].

Darussalam Mosque is no different from other mosques in rewarding *da'i* for their *da'wah* performance during Ramadhan, though the amount is being adjusted to its current financial state. The allowance given is indeed rather smaller from other mosques since its state is not doing well. The committee testifies that *da'i* often excuse themselves not to attend at Darussalam Mosque but other mosques with large allowance.

### 4) *Popularity*

There are about 123 preachers (*da'i*) whose names are registered at the Ministry and some who are not listed yet. Their popularity does not really depend on the list but rather the total time they spent on *da'wah*. Some preachers prefer or even compete each other in delivering their speech to a big group of attendants in a Grand Mosque rather than to a few attendants in a rather small mosque such as at Darussalam Mosque. Their growing popularity demands more allowance that the Mosque committee could not afford.

### 5) *Miscommunication*

Communication will only succeed when each element; speaker, listener, message, media, effect and feedback, work well. Otherwise, miscommunication happens. The preachers and the committee should have maintained a good communication since they share the same responsibility, Muslims' fate.

According to Darussalam Mosque committee, they always contact the preacher beforehand to remind them about the schedule. However, the committee could not reach them either the preacher turned their phones off or the number is changed. On the contrary, the preacher confesses that there is no single call from the committee. Thus, their coordination should be established better to keep the schedule running.

### 6) *Disremember*

Time management is another reason for the preachers' absence. They are pretty occupied with other tasks and fail to remember the task they assigned to from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Both the committee and the preachers have been informed about the schedule along with the contact number for these purposes; a reference for the preachers in organizing their time and facilitating the committee to remind the preachers about the schedule.

### 7) *Misfortune*

*Da'i* is no exception in experiencing a misfortune in life. They may suffer from an illness or catastrophe. Those unfortunate fates affect their psychological state, be it sad, scared or anxious which prevent them performing *da'wah*. This unavoidable reason is well understood by the attendants (*mad'u*) compare to the previous ones. It is no wonder that a lineal communication between the committee and the preacher is required to get the *mad'u* correct information regarding the preacher absence.

### 8) *Inconvenience*

*Da'i* tends to purposely skip their *da'wah* schedule because the committee fails to create a comfortable situation. Inconvenience meant here are uncomfortable by Imam's way of reading Al-Qur'an or leading the prayers, committee's incapability in directing the kids not to play around or be noisy during prayers, different number in *raka'at* (a single unit of Islamic prayers) from the way the preacher always do, last minutes call from the committee and no transportation arranged to take the preachers as ruled by the Ministry.

### 9) *Inactive Committees*

The reasons in regard to *da'i* absence are mostly external ones, not internal. Both committee and attendants (*mad'u*) usually condemn the preacher for their absence while the fact shows the opposite. H. Umar Sulaiman points out their committee who are not actively participating in arranging activity is another factor for the absence as well.

## **a. *Mad'u* (Attendants) responses to *Da'i* Absence during the Holy Month of Ramadhan at Darussalam Mosque Kampung Pisang**

*Mad'u* is the most influential element in *da'wah* whose presence is inseparable from *Da'i*. The preacher is nothing without their attendants. An effective *da'wah* is indicated by their mind and behavior alteration after listen to the speech. Therefore, a *da'i* should actively encourage their *mad'u* to do good deeds through *da'wah*.

*Mad'u* who lives around Darussalam Mosque Kampung Pisang belongs to *mad'u ijabah*, means they have been a Muslims and have faith to Islamic values. Practicing *da'wah* to *mad'u ijabah* is still considered important to escalate their *Iman* (faith), *Islam* (voluntarily submission) and *Ihsan* (attaining perfection). Most *mad'u* at Darussalam Mosque is merchants whose rarely own a spare time to attend a speech, yet they still manage to do their prayer at the mosque. This good opportunity should not be missed by the preachers to deliver the speech.

*Mad'u* at Darussalam Mosque gives various responses about the preacher absence during Ramadhan. Some are ignorant, some are disappointed and complained about it. In fact, *da'i* presence itself is a source of motivation, knowledge and advices for *mad'u*. Their speech enlightens and convinces *mad'u* to continuously do good deeds during Ramadhan, especially fasting.

*Mad'u* disappointment shows their concern and interest to *da'wah* which the Ministry has facilitated them by issuing a schedule. It is really unfortunate if the preachers are absent since it shows their inconsistency between what they are saying and doing. As a role model for Muslims who has always been respected, a *da'i* should not take this task lightly.

In *mad'u* opinion, dedicated preachers are expected to efficiently organize their time between personal and *da'wah* matter and overcome any problems to keep spreading Islamic values. There is no point for the Ministry to cope with this problem if the preachers themselves have no intention in making up their absence.

Apparently, the above discussions have unintentionally dragged the attendants (*mad'u*) of Darussalam Mosque into a false mindset about the preachers. *Da'i* is considered as irresponsible party in practicing *da'wah*. Since being a preacher means sincerely devoting his life for *mad'u* and fully responsible for every task he is assigned to.

**b. Ministry of Religious Affair in regards to *Da'i* Absence during the Holy Month of Ramadhan at Darussalam Mosque Kampung Pisang**

As the highest organization, government rules every aspect in society such as leading and accepting aspiration to prevent collision between people with distinctive desire [10]. The previous discussion shows that *da'i* absence is not only personal but government concern as well.

Government meant here is Sorong Ministry of Religious Affair which rules and organize *da'wah* matters. Any issue related to *da'wah* should be directed to the Ministry for a solution. Imam Al-Ghazali quoted that government and religion is the two sides of the same coin, religion without government is lost and government without religion is destroyed.

Ironically, both committee and attendants (*mad'u*) at Darussalam Mosque and some other mosques seem to neglect about the absence because the problem keep arising every year. It is even worsening in Ramadhan 2016 when only 6 out of 30 preachers have attended the invitation. In fact, the Ministry has 123 names on their list.

Consequently, the ministry urges to take effective actions to cope with this problem. Here are some solutions that were done and are newly proposed:

- 1) Conducting an intern meeting among the committee before Ramdhan to vote their preachers preference.
- 2) Distributing leaflets to let each committee write which preachers they want to be invited.
- 3) Considering the distance between the preachers' house and the designated mosques in arranging the schedule.
- 4) Enclosing each preacher contact number on the schedule for the committee reference.
- 5) Distributing the printed schedule to each preacher and committee beforehand.
- 6) In 2014, a coordination meeting between the preachers and the committee has been conducted to discuss about the preachers absence.
- 7) In the upcoming December 2016, another coordination meeting will be hosted by Head of Bimas Islam (Muslims Community Counseling Organization) to cooperatively analyze the problems then deals with them.
- 8) Revising the schedule for 2016 by selectively choose only some competent and dedicated preaches to participate, while leaving the irresponsibility ones [11].

Some methods discussed above have been adopted by the Ministry but the problem keeps arising and worsening. The Ministry itself has not proposed a renewed method yet to resolve the problem. On the other side, the committees of Darussalam Mosque have initiated an alternative method by setting up some attendants who are quite educated in Islam values to cover the absence.

#### 4. Conclusion

*Da'wah* defiance comes from external party in the form of denial, insult and even terror from the objects. While the internal factor surprisingly comes from the preachers themselves. External defiance is relatively easy to be resolved by the preachers [12] since they personally know and experience the problems. On the contrary, the internal defiance is quite complicated because the preachers feel nothing but the attendants do. The attendants experience disappointment once the preachers skip the schedule without notice. This behavior indicates that the preachers' saying and doing is not consistent. A *da'i* has to stick to the code of ethics, fullest sense of responsibility and continuously inspired by Rasulullah in doing his *da'wah* by acquiring these characteristics; Shiddiq (Truthful), Amanah (Trustworthy), Fathonah (Wise) and Tabligh (Conveying people) (Rofiq, 2015: 252). A *da'i* should always be a good role model for his *mad'u* by only saying good words and doing good deeds.

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