

The Implementation of The Social Penetration Theory in Da'wah Communication

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ABSTRACT

Dakwah invites towards goodness through effective communication. The social penetration theory builds intimate relationships, enhances message acceptance, and creates positive impacts for the audience (mad'u). This study analyzes the application of social penetration theory in da'wah communication to improve the effectiveness and interpersonal relationships between the da'i and mad'u. The research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with literature review, examining social penetration theory in da'wah communication by collecting data from books, journals, and relevant articles. The findings show: In the orientation stage, the da'i introduces themselves and provides basic religious information to establish an initial connection. In the exploratory affective exchange stage, the da'i opens up, sharing more personal values and religious messages, creating emotional closeness. In the affective stage, the da'i shares personal experiences and life challenges, deepening understanding and trust. In the stable stage, the relationship becomes more honest and intimate, with efficient communication, strengthening the acceptance of religious messages.

Keywords

Da'wah, Communication, Social Penetration

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A. INTRODUCTION

Da'wah, in its linguistic sense, means to call, invite, or urge. In the Qur'an, the concept of da'wah is mentioned 39 times in the context of inviting people to goodness and Islam, while 7 times it refers to an invitation towards evil or hell (Husna & Syam, 2021). Aboebakar Atjeh explains that da'wah is a command to invite humanity to return to, follow, and live according to the path of Allah SWT (Aziz, 2017). According to Thoha Yahya Oemarin his research, da'wah means



calling and urging with wisdom, offering good advice, and guiding people to follow the right path in accordance with the commands of Allah SWT (Husna & Syam, 2021).

Da'wah is an effort to spread Islamic teachings and encourage behavioral change, where communication plays an essential role in inspiring and influencing the *mad'u* (the recipient of da'wah) with informative, persuasive, recreational, and argumentative goals (Prasongko, 2022). To make da'wah more effective, a da'i (preacher) not only needs to understand da'wah theories but must also have a deep understanding of communication theories to convey messages accurately (Komara, 2021). The Social Penetration Theory explains how interpersonal relationships gradually evolve from surface-level information to more intimate connections, making it relevant in building strong relationships between the da'i and the mad'u (Habibah, Shabira, & Irwansyah, 2021).

The Social Penetration Theory describes the process of social communication that occurs through the development of relationships, where communication becomes more intimate through openness between individuals (Kustiawan et al., 2022; Safitri et al., 2021). According to Tryssa, the theory explains that interpersonal relationships develop through stages of information disclosure, starting from shallow levels to deeper intimacy (Habibah et al., 2021). In da'wah communication, the Social Penetration Theory is essential as it helps build a closer relationship between the da'i and the mad'u. This theory allows for breaking through self-defense layers to achieve a deeper and more meaningful relationship (Shanaz, 2021).

In da'wah communication, the da'i begins by conveying general messages about religion and morality to establish an initial understanding with the mad'u. However, to form a deeper relationship, the da'i needs to understand the emotional, psychological, and spiritual layers of the mad'u. The process of social penetration in da'wah involves understanding the values, beliefs, and needs of the mad'u on a more personal level, allowing the da'wah message to be communicated more meaningfully and relevantly. By building a closer relationship, the da'i can respond to the challenges and concerns of the mad'u and offer solutions based on religious values that are in line with their needs. This will increase the mad'u's trust and make the da'wah message more accepted, ultimately having a positive impact on their lives (Dhani, 2023).

Several previous studies have discussed the Social Penetration Theory, including: First, Taylor's Social Penetration Theory describes the development of interpersonal relationships through two dimensions: breadth of penetration, which refers to the amount of interaction, and depth of penetration, which refers to the intimacy level of interactions between individuals (Abdurrahman et al., 2021). Second, Carpenter identified four layers of information in interpersonal relationships: superficial layers (basic information), middle layers (views and attitudes), inner layers (values, hopes, secrets), and the core layer (most important information) (Habibah et al., 2021). Third, the Social Penetration Theory, also called the onion theory, describes the layered structure of personality, where the outermost layer contains publicly accessible information, and the following layers reflect the depth of the relationship (Safitri et al., 2021). Based on these earlier studies, this research aims to fill a gap by focusing on the application of the Social Penetration Theory in da'wah communication, which is a distinct subject in this context. Therefore, the researcher is interested in investigating this topic to provide a contribution to this gap.

The purpose of this research is to examine and analyze the implementation of the Social

Penetration Theory in da'wah communication. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide valuable insights for da'i and da'wah practitioners in enhancing the effectiveness of da'wah communication through a more structured approach, thereby achieving the primary goals of da'wah more effectively. This research is also expected to contribute to optimizing interpersonal relationships in the context of da'wah in a deeper and more effective way.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature study, aimed at examining the application of social penetration theory in the context of dakwah (Islamic preaching) communication. The theory used is West & Turner's theory of the stages of social penetration, which explains the orientation stage, exploratory affective exchange stage, affective stage, and stable stage. In this study, the theory is applied to analyze how a da'i (preacher) can build closer and more intimate relationships with the mad'u (audience) by understanding the stages of communication that occur, from surface-level communication to deeper, more meaningful communication in dakwah. Qualitative research is a method used to explore and understand the meaning of a group or individual from social or human issues (Creswell, 2019). Generally, qualitative research can be used to study community life, behavior, history, social movements, and social problems (Sidiq & Miftachul, 2019).

Data collection techniques come from various sources, such as books, journals, e-journals, existing research, and other supporting documents (Adlini, Dinda, Yulinda, Chotimah, & Merliyana, 2022). These sources are used to gather relevant data and strengthen the analysis in this study. By collecting existing literature, this research can develop a deeper understanding of the topic being studied and ensure that the findings are based on reliable and credible references. The data processing in this study is carried out in several stages. The first stage is searching for articles using Google and Google Scholar search engines to obtain relevant sources. The second stage is the selection of search results, where the found articles are filtered based on their relevance to the research topic. In the third stage, the selected articles are chosen for use in the study. The fourth stage involves content analysis of the articles to ensure that the content aligns with the research topic and can support the research objectives accurately and comprehensively.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research is developed from the theory of West & Turner (Perdana, 2022) about the stages of social penetration, which are explained as follows:

Table 1. Stages of Social Penetration	
Stages	Explanation
<i>Orientation Stage</i>	The orientation stage is the stage where individuals share only general information such as name, ethnicity, and place of residence with newly acquainted people, with communication remaining impersonal and not yet intimate (Aurel, 2022).
<i>Exploratory Affective Exchange Stage</i>	The affective exchange stage is the transition in which individuals begin to reveal deeper personal aspects, show their characteristics, and become more open in social interactions (Dhani, 2023).
<i>Affective Stage</i>	The affective exchange stage describes the transition to more personal communication, where individuals begin to share



<i>Stable Stage</i>	personal issues, show deeper commitment, and create comfort in interpersonal relationships (Kustiawan et al., 2022). The stable exchange stage is the phase where individuals reach total honesty and intimacy, with communication being efficient and predictable, resulting in a stable relationship without doubts (Putri, 2022).
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Based on Table 1 above, the social penetration theory by West & Turner, when applied to da'wah communication, can be explained as follows:

1. Orientation Stage in Da'wah Communication

The orientation stage in da'wah communication is the initial phase where the preacher introduces themselves in an impersonal and formal manner, providing basic information about religious teachings to establish a foundation for a relationship that allows for more intimate and profound communication, so that the da'wah message can be better accepted and understood. According to Ali Mahfudz, da'wah in Islam is an invitation for people to do good deeds, follow guidance, and spread Islamic values for the happiness of this world and the hereafter, with da'wah planning aimed at creating a better religious life (Abdullah, 2020).

According to HA Overstreet, engaging material is organized using approaches such as deductive, inductive, chronological, logical, spatial, and topical methods, with arrangements adapted to the audience's way of thinking, and the use of common symbols to ensure mutual understanding (Abdullah, 2019, p.67). The material must offer alternative solutions; however, an anonymous, heterogeneous, and dispersed audience often finds it difficult to accept information, especially those who are stubborn and hard to influence (Sumadiria, 2014, p.117).

The presentation of varied da'wah materials elicits significant responses from the audience (mad'u), leading to positive changes in social-religious life, such as the culture of silaturahmi (strengthening ties) and worship, with a focus on ethics as an effort to improve society, especially among the younger generation (Renel, 2014). Da'wah material covers all Islamic teachings in the Qur'an and Hadith, but it is more specifically related to the conversation between Prophet Muhammad and the angel Jibril, who directly taught the core principles of Islam (Zain, 2019).

Da'wah material must contain da'wah values, including aqidah-tawhid (faith), shari'ah (Islamic law), and akhlak-tasauf (morality and spirituality), in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, with the goal of inviting people to the path of God, Islam, which encompasses all aspects of human life (Mistarija, 2018). In the modern era, da'wah preachers should possess broad knowledge, convey relevant messages, use appropriate methods, and utilize proper communication media according to current societal developments and conditions (Zulkarnaini, 2015).

To achieve long-term da'wah goals, an effective communication management system is needed, with a deep understanding of Islamic values, as well as the selection of material, methods, and language suited to the psychology of the da'wah audience, including age, religion, gender, culture, and other factors (Kartini, 2024). Da'wah material covers three main aspects: aqidah, shari'ah, and akhlak. Aqidah material is reflected in articles such as "Don't Sacrifice Your Religion," "Prohibition of Longing for Death," and

"Do We Remember the Traffic Jam on the Day of Judgment?". Shari'ah material is found in topics such as "Let's Get Married," "What Is Our Ramadan Theme," "Four Heavenly Deeds in One Day," "Zakat Empowers," and "Loving for the Sake of Allah." As for akhlak, topics include "Practicing Sincerity," "Three Saviors and Three Destroyers," "Dream Home," and "When Mother Sleeps" (Agustika, 2019).

2. Exploratory Affective Exchange Stage in Da'wah Communication

The exchange of affective exploration in da'wah communication is a stage where the preacher opens up, shares personal values and religious messages deeply, creating more open and inclusive communication, as well as showing empathy and emotional closeness to build strong social relationships and enable the religious message to be received more touchingly. Da'wah communication through social media becomes effective and engaging when considering social interaction patterns, persuasive techniques, and ethos, as demonstrated by Ustadz Abdul Somad, Adi Hidayat, and Evie Effendi in their da'wah communication through social media (Rohman, 2019).

The practice of da'wah communication needs to adapt to the changing times and societal tendencies in the digital era, adjusting da'wah strategies and methods to be more effective, while considering the characteristics of the media, the type of users, and the goals to be achieved for the appropriate adaptation of da'wah (Ridwan, 2022). Building a good da'wah communication pattern can prevent religious conflicts by delivering da'wah messages that emphasize values of tolerance, brotherhood, and interfaith dialogue, as well as raising awareness to create harmony in a pluralistic country through effective communication efforts (Burhanuddin, 2017).

To carry out Islamic da'wah through creative communication, an effective communication strategy is needed, mastering four basic skills: writing, reading, speaking, and listening, both personally and professionally (Zarkani & Muda, 2017). If the preachers or dā'i master effective da'wah communication, as mentioned in the Qur'an as *qaulan balighan* (a clear, impactful word), they will be able to internalize Islamic teachings in the hearts and minds of the people, enabling them to act as true Muslims (Markarma, 2014).

Communication and da'wah play a crucial role in the success of Islamic educational institutions, ensuring effective communication through elements such as the communicator, the message, the channel, as well as persuasive approaches and emotional closeness. The communication applied must align with the organizational culture and include interprofessional, associative-accommodative, and interpersonal communication (Muttaqin, 2018). The process of delivering the divine message requires mastery of effective communication so that the message is well understood, as done by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in his da'wah, which began privately within his family and then publicly until it was accepted across the Arabian Peninsula (Miftakhuddin, 2022).

To achieve the objectives of da'wah, efforts are required that involve the elements of da'wah communication, including the da'wah subject (the dā'i) as the deliverer of Islamic teachings to society, whether orally, in writing, or through actions, with attention to general and specific criteria (Kamaruzzaman, 2022). Da'wah communication includes various forms, such as *dakwah bil-lisan* (oral communication), *dakwah bil-kitabah* (written communication), and *dakwah bil-hal* (through actions), and involves various message

flows, targets, media, and forms of communication, whether individual, mass, group, or transcendental communication with God (Kamaluddin, 2020).

3. Affective Stage in Da'wah Communication

The affective exchange in da'wah communication represents a transition to more personal and emotional communication, where the preacher shares relevant life experiences and issues, creates comfort, builds trust, and allows the audience to receive the religious message with emotional closeness for a deeper understanding. The persuasive communication carried out by the dā'i at the Majelis Taklim Griyalimantab through stages of building familiarity, using specific methods, discussion sessions, personal communication, and ultimately enhancing the insight, self-confidence, and worship quality of the congregation, is done well and effectively (Hanafi et al., 2022).

The emotional intelligence of the dā'i includes intrapersonal emotional management and good interpersonal social interaction, with strong motivation, empathy, responsibility, and the ability to motivate the congregation to practice da'wah in daily life (Rahmawati, 2018). Da'wah orientation focuses on the needs of the mad'u (the audience), not the interests of the dā'i, with both parties understanding and complementing each other; the dā'i must convey the da'wah message appropriately so that it is well received, while the mad'u also needs to have a positive judgment of the message (Hariyanto, 2020). An effective dā'i or religious counselor can be divided into three parts: first, effective for themselves by maintaining spiritual and emotional health and being able to overcome personal problems; second, effective for others (mad'u) by having a personality that makes the mad'u feel respected, comfortable, and valued (Mustar, 2015).

The persuasive communication of the dā'i in delivering the da'wah understanding to the mad'u is carried out through an approach based on familiarity, the use of various methods, question-and-answer sessions, personal communication, and results in the improvement of the congregation's insight, self-confidence, and worship quality (Afriyanto, 2018). The da'wah strategy applied includes sentimental approaches focusing on emotional aspects such as comfort and togetherness, rational approaches that rely on logic to be accepted by reason, and sensory approaches related to the direct experiences of individuals during da'wah activities and the learning that takes place (Aziz & Novebriansyah, 2022).

4. Stable Stage in Da'wah Communication

The stable exchange stage in da'wah communication occurs when the preacher and the audience reach a level of honesty and intimacy, where the religious message is delivered clearly, efficiently, and predictably, creating a stable relationship, deepening understanding, and strengthening the audience's commitment to religious values with firm belief. The role of female da'iyah (female preachers) in society is to provide religious enlightenment, assist male preachers in delivering feminist da'wah, prevent religious deviations, and create progressive Muslim women using methods like da'wah bil hikmah (da'wah with wisdom), Mau'izatil Hasanah (kind advice), and Mujadalah (debate), even when facing external obstacles such as low public interest and a lack of cadre training (Putri, 2018).

The effectiveness of da'wah through social media can be considered successful if the frequency of media usage is high, and individuals are able to practice the da'wah

messages delivered and apply the content of da'wah studies in their daily lives (Syaifuddin & Muhid, 2021). Da'wah strategies within the Jamaah Tabligh movement include planning activities through deliberation to appoint speakers for Taklim Pagi (morning study), Taklim Dzuhur (midday study), Bayan Maghrib (evening sermon), and Bayan Subuh (pre-dawn sermon), as well as implementing activities that include delivering religious lectures (tausiyah) and reading the book Fadhilah Amal after every prayer as a follow-up to the planning (Ronsi & Bukhory, 2021).

The da'wah message in the novel *Sujud Dia Menyentuhku* by Fahri F. Fathoni is divided into three main categories: Aqidah (Faith in Allah, angels, the scriptures, prophets, destiny, and the Day of Judgment), Shari'ah (worship and social interactions), and Akhlaq (ethics towards Allah, humanity, and the environment), which are conveyed through dialogue and statements, leaving a profound impact on the readers (Marsela et al., 2024).

Through social media, the da'wah message can spread quickly and effectively to a wider audience. However, social media use must be wise and responsible, paying attention to the truth, credibility, and context of Islamic teachings, and involving collaboration between religious scholars (kiai), students (santri), and social media users to avoid the spread of inaccurate information and enhance digital literacy (Ummah, 2022). The application of da'wah values in the digital era requires the right typology of media to bridge the da'wah message in an educational manner, which in turn will transform stigma and create a religious space through digital media, while also requiring strong methods and applications to reinforce the effectiveness of da'wah media in the global community (Latif, 2021).

Instagram social media has a positive and significant influence on the spread of da'wah, as it is considered fresh and engaging with creative delivery, attractive visuals, and supporting features. Therefore, the da'wah information conveyed tends to be fun, valid, and suitable for various groups that are active on Instagram (Putri et al., 2021). The use of da'wah media includes print media such as books and traditional Islamic texts (kitab kuning) for da'wah materials, as well as audio media, such as sound systems, to ensure the message is heard clearly, influencing the smooth delivery of da'wah and allowing the audience to listen to and understand the material presented well (Asyaari et al., 2022).

D. CONCLUSION

Da'wah is an invitation to goodness and Islam, with communication being the key to its effectiveness. Through the theory of social penetration, the preacher builds a more intimate and relevant relationship with the mad'u (audience), recognizing personal values and beliefs. This enhances the acceptance of the da'wah message, creating a positive impact on the lives of the mad'u. This study adapts the Social Penetration Theory by West & Turner in da'wah communication, which consists of four stages: orientation, affective exploration, affective exchange, and the stable stage.

In the orientation stage, the preacher formally introduces themselves and shares basic



information about religious teachings. The aim is to build an initial relationship that allows for deeper communication. In the affective exploration stage, the preacher begins to open up and share personal values and religious messages, creating emotional closeness and strengthening social bonds. The affective stage involves deeper communication, where the preacher shares personal experiences and life issues to build trust, create comfort, and deepen the understanding of the religious message. In the stable stage, the relationship that has been established becomes more honest and intimate, with communication becoming more efficient, leading to the religious message being received with stronger conviction.

In da'wah communication, the use of appropriate media, such as social media, is essential to reach a wider audience. Social media platforms like Instagram provide space for delivering da'wah messages in a more creative and engaging way, making it easier for diverse groups to accept the message. Preachers must also adopt approaches that are relevant to the social and psychological conditions of the mad'u to make the da'wah message more effective.

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