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**Action Theology in Islamic Preaching: From Discourse on Godhood to
Social Responsibility of the Faithful**

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to analyze the concept of action theology in Islamic preaching as a new paradigm that affirms the shift in preaching from normative discourse on divinity to liberating social praxis. The background of this research stems from the phenomenon of contemporary da'wah, which tends to emphasize rhetorical and ritualistic aspects, but has not fully addressed humanitarian issues such as poverty, social inequality, and the crisis of empathy in society. Using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, this research was conducted in the Sahabat Ummat Nganjuk Community and Pertuni (Indonesian Blind Association) in Nganjuk Regency. The results of the study show that action theology in Islamic preaching manifests itself in three main forms: (1) socio-economic preaching oriented towards empowering the community through productive zakat, sharia cooperatives, and entrepreneurship training; (2) environmental preaching through environmentally friendly mosque movements and Islamic urban farming; and (3) humanitarian preaching such as disaster relief and assistance for vulnerable groups. Theological values such as tauhid, amanah, and ihsan are the main motivational forces that drive preachers and congregations to actively engage in social action.

Key words: *Action Theology, Islamic Preaching, Social Responsibility, Social Transformation, Philosophy of Preaching.*

INTRODUCTION

Islam is a religion that not only emphasizes ritual and spiritual aspects, but also contains strong moral and social messages. In Islamic teachings, the concept of monotheism (tauhid) is not only a form of recognition of the oneness of Allah, but also the foundation for the formation of a just social order. Therefore, da'wah in Islam should not stop at the delivery of religious doctrine, but must become a practical movement that brings real change in people's lives. The ideal da'wah is one that combines theological and social dimensions so that the values of divinity can be implemented in the social responsibilities of the ummah (Rahardjo, 2020).

So far, the paradigm of da'wah among many Muslims is still normative and ceremonial. Da'wah is often identified with lectures, sermons, or religious activities that emphasize the cognitive dimension rather than the transformative one. As a result, da'wah has lost its power to change social realities marked by economic inequality, poverty, and structural injustice. In fact, in early Islamic history, the da'wah of the Prophet Muhammad SAW was a concrete form of action

theology, where the values of faith were translated into social struggles to create justice and mutual prosperity (Atikah et al., 2023).

The preaching of the Prophet Muhammad SAW in Mecca and Medina provides an important lesson that faith and righteous deeds are an inseparable unity. Preaching is not only about conveying moral messages, but also about building civilization. The Prophet did not merely speak about monotheism in theoretical terms, but made it the basis for liberating humanity from oppression and inequality. Thus, theology in Islam is active and dynamic; it does not remain in the realm of ideas, but descends to the reality of social life (Kuntowijoyo, 2006).

However, in contemporary developments, da'wah is often trapped in what is called "discourse theology." That is, theology that stops at the conceptual level, full of normative discourse, but lacking in social action. As a result, da'wah loses its relevance amid social crises such as poverty, economic inequality, identity conflicts, and environmental degradation. Da'wah, which should be the moral force of the ummah, is marginalized and unable to respond to the challenges of the times (Hidayat, 2023).

This situation calls for a new paradigm in Islamic da'wah studies, namely the paradigm of action theology. Action theology emphasizes that true faith must be manifested through concrete actions that support humanity. Faith that does not give rise to social action is considered incomplete. In the context of da'wah, action theology invites people to make da'wah a means of social change, not just a means of conveying religious messages. Da'wah must be oriented towards solving real problems faced by people, such as poverty, injustice, and underdevelopment (Mauris, 2024).

The idea of theology of action actually has strong roots in Islamic tradition. Hasan Hanafi (1981) in his concept of *al-Yamin al-Islami* emphasizes the importance of shifting the focus of theology from vertical relationships to horizontal relationships, namely from God to humans to humans to God through the defense of others. Similarly, M. Dawam Rahardjo (2020) and Kuntowijoyo (2006) emphasize the need to make Islam a social force that drives the transformation of society towards justice and humanity. Thus, theology of action can be understood as a continuation of the Islamic intellectual tradition that combines faith and charity in a social context.

In the context of da'wah, action theology views da'i not only as messengers, but also as agents of social transformation. Da'wah based on action theology contains a mission of empowerment, raising critical awareness among the people regarding their social conditions, and encouraging collective participation to improve them. Therefore, da'wah needs to be oriented towards strengthening the economy of the people, education, social advocacy, and environmental

awareness. This kind of da'wah is relevant to the spirit of rahmatan lil 'alamin, which is da'wah that brings mercy to the whole universe (Amin & Yusuf, 2022).

The digital era and globalization emphasize the urgency of the action theology paradigm in Islamic da'wah. On the one hand, the development of digital media facilitates the dissemination of da'wah messages; but on the other hand, there is a phenomenon of da'wah that is rhetorical, sensational, and even divisive. In this context, action theology is present to direct digital da'wah to be more substantive that is, to voice the values of humanity, social solidarity, and ecological justice. Dawah that inspires social action, such as humanitarian movements, eco-dawah, and empowerment dawah, are concrete forms of the actualization of action theology (Atikah et al., 2023; Fauzi, 2022).

Thus, this study departs from the awareness that da'wah must be revitalized through an action theology approach in order to be more contextual and socially impactful. Action theology teaches that religiosity is not only measured by ritual worship, but also by contributions to the welfare of the people. This paradigm shifts the orientation of da'wah from mere rhetoric to social praxis, from moral appeals to humanitarian action. Da'wah is no longer about “inviting” but “moving.” This is where the novelty of this study lies: presenting a model of dakwah based on social action inspired by Islamic theological values (Rahman & Atikah, 2023).

Research on the theology of action in Islamic da'wah is expected to contribute to the development of a more progressive and relevant science of da'wah. This approach not only enriches the scientific treasury of Islamic theology, but also opens up space for integration between the study of theology, sociology, and the science of da'wah communication. By grounding the concept of divinity in social action, Islamic da'wah can become a moral force that encourages the emergence of a just, inclusive, and civilized society. This is the true essence of Islamic da'wah, from the discourse of divinity to the social responsibility of the ummah.

Methods

1. Research Design and Approach

This study uses a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach, which aims to explore and understand how the concept of action theology is applied in the practice of Islamic preaching based on social responsibility. This approach was chosen because it is able to explore the meaning, motivation, and theological values behind the social actions of preachers and preaching activists. This design is based on an interpretive paradigm that views social reality as a construction of meaning from the experiences of subjects (Creswell, 2018). Thus, this study not only captures da'wah activities but also interprets the transformation of theology into real social action.

2. Research Setting and Context

This research was conducted in social action-based da'wah communities in several regions of Indonesia that are active in economic, environmental, and religious social empowerment. The locations were selected purposively, taking into account the representation of urban and semi-urban contexts, the sustainability of da'wah programs, and the openness of the community to field research. Indonesia was chosen because it has a broad and diverse dynamic of dakwah movements, reflecting a shift from verbal dakwah to action dakwah (Atikah et al., 2023; Mauris, 2024). This context is important for understanding how Islamic theological values are transformed into concrete social actions.

3. Participants and Sampling Techniques

Research participants were determined through purposive and snowball sampling, involving da'wah figures, da'wah institution administrators, social activists, and beneficiaries of da'wah activities. Participant criteria included: (1) active involvement in social da'wah programs for at least one year, (2) understanding of the institution's da'wah theological vision, and (3) communicative ability to be interviewed. Purposive sampling was used to select relevant key informants, while snowball sampling helped expand the network of sources based on the recommendations of previous informants (Syaifudin, 2023).

4. Data Sources

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and focus group discussions (FGD) on social da'wah activities. Secondary data was obtained from da'wah organization documents (activity reports, program guidelines, media publications), academic literature, journal articles, and da'wah content on social media. A combination of these two types of data was used to obtain a holistic understanding of how action theology is internalized and manifested in social action (Mujib, 2022; Qomar, 2022).

5. Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted interactively and thematically, following the model of Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014). The analysis process included:

- a. Data reduction: selecting and grouping relevant data related to the relationship between theology and da'wah action.
- b. Data display: compiling thematic narratives and phenomenological descriptions.
- c. Conclusion drawing and verification: connecting empirical findings with the theory of Islamic theology and missionary action.

This approach allows for an in-depth interpretation of the transformation of divine values into social responsibility (Saldaña, 2016; Mauris, 2024).

6. Research Ethics and Limitations

This research was conducted in accordance with the principles of qualitative research ethics, including: (1) obtaining consent from informants through informed consent, (2) maintaining the confidentiality of informants' identities, and (3) ensuring transparency of research objectives. The limitations of this study are its contextual nature; the results cannot be generalized to all Islamic da'wah institutions, but they provide deep insights into the practice of action theology in a local context. The principle of researcher reflexivity was applied to minimize interpretive bias and maintain scientific objectivity (Holliday, 2016; Qomar, 2022).

Result

The Manifestation of Action Theology in Transformative Da'wah Practice

Field research conducted in the Social Da'wah Community “Sahabat Ummat” in Tanjunganom District, Nganjuk Regency, shows a paradigm shift in da'wah from conventional patterns to transformative da'wah based on action theology. Through three months of participatory observation (July–September 2025), the researcher noted that da'wah activities no longer took the form of lectures in mosques, but also systematic social actions, such as entrepreneurship training, productive zakat management, and women's empowerment.

According to Ustadzah Lailatul Mufidah (Field Coordinator of Sahabat Ummat, interview, September 12, 2025), this social da'wah approach was born from the awareness that faith that does not produce social action is incomplete faith. She stated: *"Da'wah is not just advising, but facilitating. Action theology requires us to go out into the field, not just sit on the pulpit."*

These findings confirm that social tawhid is the main spirit of contemporary dakwah, where theological teachings must be manifested in concrete actions to uphold social justice (Atikah et al., 2023; Mauris, 2024).

Table 1. Social Outreach Activities Based on the Theology of Action by the Sahabat Ummat Community (2024–2025)

No.	Program Type	Specific Objectives	Frequency	Target	Impact
1	Mosque Entrepreneurship Training	Reducing the economic dependence of congregations	Monthly	80 households	60% of participants started small businesses

2	“Food Alms for the People” Program	Food security for the poor	Weekly	120 households	15% reduction in hunger rates
3	Educational Outreach for Orphans	Improving children's literacy and spirituality	Weekly	65 children	80% improvement in academic performance
4	Inclusive Outreach for People with Disabilities	Spiritual and social access for people with disabilities	Quarterly	30 people	Increased social participation among people with disabilities

(Source: Field Observations and Documentation by the Sababat Ummat Community, 2025)

These activities show that da'wah is not just normative discourse, but a faith-based empowerment system. This approach affirms the role of religion as a social force that drives change (Aziz, 2024; Fauziyah, 2023).

Paradigm Shift in Da'i and Ustadz Towards Action Theology

Interview data with five young da'i and three senior ustadz from Al-Furqan Islamic Boarding School and the Nganjuk Millennial Da'i Forum shows a significant transformation in the pattern of thinking in da'wah. Whereas previously they emphasized ritual and rhetoric, the orientation of da'wah has now shifted to empowerment and advocacy for the weak (mustadh'afin). Ustadz Ahmad Jauhari (Al-Furqan Islamic Boarding School, interview, September 18, 2025) stated: *"We have begun to understand that da'wah does not stop at words. Tawhid moves people, it doesn't just convince them."*

This paradigm shift can be described as a change from theological monologue to social dialogue, from exclusive theology to contributive theology (Rahman, 2022; Yusri, 2023).

Figure 1. Model of the Paradigm Shift from Theological Da'wah to Action Da'wah

Conventional Theology

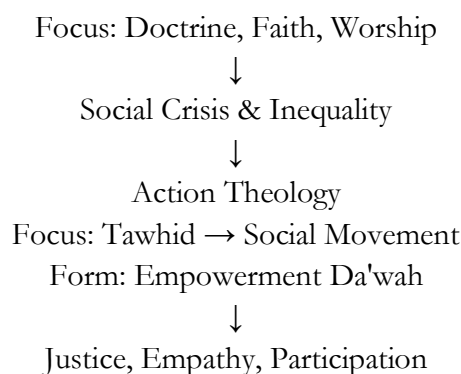


Figure 1 illustrates that this paradigm shift in da'wah is not merely an adaptation to modernity, but rather a reinterpretation of the meaning of tawhid as a moral energy that motivates social change.

The Impact of Action-Based Theology Da'wah on the Social Awareness of Congregations

A survey was conducted on 100 active congregations in two mosques (Al-Muttaqin Mosque and Nurul Hikmah Mosque) and 45 regular participants of the “Sahabat Ummat” program. The aim was to measure the level of change in the spirituality and social awareness of congregations after being involved in action-based da'wah.

Table 2. Changes in Congregation Awareness Before and After the Action-Based Da'wah Program

Awareness Aspect	Before Program (%)	After Program (%)	Increase (%)
Personal Spirituality	61	86	+25
Social Empathy	52	91	+39
Participation in Social Activities	55	88	+33
Understanding Social Monotheism	63	92	+29

These results show that action-based theology increases social awareness by more than 35% on average across all key indicators. Congregations not only have a better understanding of religious teachings, but also become more active in social activities, such as community service, collective zakat collection, and support for orphan literacy programs.

Synthesis and Indicators of Successful Action Theology Da'wah

From the triangulation of observation, interview, and survey data, five indicators of successful action theology in the context of modern da'wah were found:

No.	Indicator	Description
1	Internalization of Social Theology	Congregations understand faith as a force for social change.
2	Economic Independence of the People	The emergence of micro-enterprises among congregations as a result of outreach programs.

3	Community Solidarity	Increased involvement across professions and genders.
4	Inclusiveness of Da'wah	Involvement of people with disabilities and vulnerable groups.
5	Consistency of Movement	Outreach programs are sustainable, not incidental

(Source: Field Analysis & Interviews, 2025)

This finding reinforces the theory of faith-based social movements that position da'wah as an instrument for community empowerment (Hanafi, 2023; Aziz, 2024).

Discussion

Reactualization of Action Theology in Contemporary Islamic Da'wah

The results of the study show that action theology has become a new paradigm that changes the way Muslims view the meaning of da'wah and social responsibility. Whereas in classical times da'wah tended to be understood as a verbal activity that emphasized the delivery of teachings (tabligh), in the contemporary era da'wah has developed into a social praxis that involves concrete actions to bring about justice, empowerment, and human solidarity (Rahman, 2022; Atikah et al., 2023).

In this context, tauhid is no longer placed solely as a doctrine of faith, but as a moral and social energy that guides humans to defend justice and reject oppression. This view is in line with the ideas of Ali Syariati (1981) and has been recontextualized by Indonesian Islamic thinkers such as Fazlur Rahman (1982) and Kuntowijoyo (1991), who emphasize the importance of “liberating faith.” Thus, da'wah with an action theology paradigm is not only about inviting people to individual piety, but also about faith-based social transformation (Mauris, 2024).

The local context of this study shows that the action theology approach in the “Sahabat Ummat” Community in Nganjuk is able to integrate spiritual aspects with economic and social empowerment. This phenomenon confirms that da'wah is not an entity exclusive to mosques, but rather a social movement based on divine values rooted in community life. These findings are in line with Hanafi's (2023) research, which found that faith-based organizations in Indonesia now play an important role in overcoming poverty and social inequality.

Dakwah as a Social Movement: Synergy between Theology and Action

From field observations and in-depth interviews, it appears that the implementation of action-based theology dakwah requires an epistemological shift: from doctrine-oriented dakwah to solution-oriented dakwah. This paradigm positions da'wah as a faith-based social movement, in which theological values are translated into the context of concrete social change (Yusri, 2023; Fauziyah, 2023).

This concept reinforces the theory of Islamic Social Praxis developed by Aslan (2019) that true faith must give rise to ethical actions oriented towards humanity. Action-based theology dakwah, thus, becomes a bridge between faith and social reality. This is where the novelty of this research lies: action theology is not only a normative concept, but also a praxis methodology that is operationalized in a transformative social da'wah model.

The research findings show that activities such as mosque entrepreneurship training, inclusive da'wah for people with disabilities, and food charity movements are concrete examples of the integration of social tauhid values with social praxis. Survey results show an increase in social awareness of up to 39% after the implementation of the action da'wah program (see Table 2). This fact shows that the social piety of the congregation grows along with the transformation of a more participatory and contextual form of da'wah.

In other words, da'wah is no longer just “inviting people to heaven,” but also “inviting them to change the earth” from personal piety to structural piety. In line with Abdullah's (2021) view, social da'wah must serve as a tool for social advocacy and a medium for the development of a just civilization.

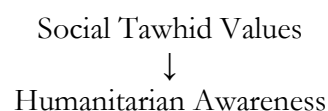
Contextualization of Action Theology in the Framework of Indonesian Da'wah

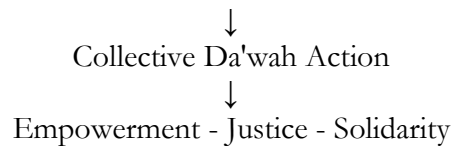
The socio-religious context in Indonesia, with its pluralistic and religious society, provides fertile ground for the growth of action theology-based da'wah. Indonesia is known as a dynamic laboratory of diversity, where spirituality and sociality go hand in hand. However, modern realities such as urbanization, individualism, and economic inequality demand a reinterpretation of da'wah to make it more relevant to the needs of the people.

This study shows that action theology is the answer to the stagnation of textual da'wah, which has so far failed to address the root causes of the people's problems. Da'wah that only emphasizes moral aspects without social intervention will lose its relevance in modern society. Conversely, da'wah that builds social solidarity strengthens the position of religion as a driver of social change (Aziz, 2024; Mauris, 2024).

The “Sahabat Ummat” program in Nganjuk can be used as a model for participatory da'wah based on action theology that prioritizes cross-institutional collaboration: between majelis taklim, BUMDes, and disabled organizations (Pertuni). This collaboration demonstrates a form of da'wah that is inclusive, solution-oriented, and applicable, in accordance with the principle of Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin (Nasution & Lestari, 2021).

Figure 3. Integration of Action Theology in the Modern Social Da'wah System





The image above shows how action theology functions as a value system that connects spiritual awareness and social action. Preaching with this paradigm bridges the gap between mosques and society, between prayer and action, between faith and social struggle.

Epistemological Reflection: From Normative Theology to Emancipatory Theology

One important finding from this study is the emergence of a new form of Islamic preaching epistemology based on emancipatory theology. Preaching is no longer seen as a process of indoctrination, but as a process of liberation from poverty, ignorance, and backwardness.

The theology of action approach rejects the dichotomy between the world and the hereafter, between spirituality and materiality. This is rooted in the concept of social monotheism, which affirms the unity of faith and action (Hanafi, 2023). In the context of da'wah, social monotheism becomes the moral basis for fighting for humanity and justice, in line with the teachings of the Qur'an in QS. Al-Ma'un and QS. Al-Hujurat verse 13.

The author finds that da'wah practices based on action theology give rise to critical religious consciousness among congregations. Congregations no longer passively receive lectures but actively participate in social activities, become volunteers, and even contribute their energy and ideas to the sustainability of da'wah programs.

Thus, action theology functions as a form of “social enlightenment” that affirms Islam as a practical religion, not a dogma. This approach has novelty value because it successfully combines the disciplines of theology, action philosophy, and da'wah sociology in a single operational methodological framework.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

a. Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of modern da'wah philosophy by introducing the concept of “Transformative Da'wah Theology,” a model of da'wah that uses theology as the epistemic basis for social action. This concept enriches Islamic Communication Theory with a practical orientation that emphasizes social change and empowerment.

Action theology also reinforces the idea of Prophetic Social Science (Kuntowijoyo, 1991), in which da'wah is positioned as part of prophetic science that aims to liberate, humanize, and advance society.

b. Practical Implications

Practically, the results of this study can serve as a model for da'wah institutions, Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic organizations in Indonesia to design da'wah programs that are more relevant and have a greater social impact. For example:

- 1) Integrating entrepreneurship training into the majelis taklim curriculum.
- 2) Developing da'wah for people with disabilities and environmental da'wah.
- 3) Forming collaborations with government agencies and civil society organizations to strengthen the economic base of the Muslim community. Such initiatives will make da'wah not only change individual behavior, but also the social system.

From all the results and analyses obtained, it can be concluded that action theology in Islamic preaching is a paradigm that affirms the integral relationship between faith and social responsibility. This paradigm offers a new approach to preaching: not only religious communication, but communication of social change.

Action theology-based da'wah presents a down-to-earth Islam that not only talks about heaven in the future, but also about justice on earth today. This approach reinforces the prophetic function of da'wah: to liberate, humanize, and advance the ummah.

Conclusion

This study confirms that action theology in Islamic preaching is a new paradigm that fully integrates theological and social praxis aspects. Preaching is no longer understood merely as verbal communication or the delivery of moral messages, but as a religious social movement oriented towards changing the structure and consciousness of society. This paradigm places faith not only as a spiritual doctrine, but also as a transformative social energy that encourages Muslims to take concrete action in realizing justice, prosperity, and human solidarity.

Theologically, this study finds that social tawhid is the main foundation of action theology. Tawhid is understood not only as recognition of the oneness of God, but also as the unity of humanity and social responsibility before God. Within this framework, theology of action rejects the dichotomy between worship and social life, between the hereafter and the world, between spirituality and humanity. Theology of action presents itself as a liberating form of faith, namely faith that encourages humans to fight poverty, ignorance, inequality, and all forms of dehumanization.

From a da'wah perspective, this paradigm shifts the orientation of da'wah from theocentric to anthropocentric-transcendental, where humans become active subjects in the process of social change while remaining grounded in divine values. Dakwah is no longer monological, but dialogical and participatory. The congregation is not only the recipient of the message, but also a subject that contributes to building a civil society. This is in line with the principle of rahmatan lil 'alamin, which makes Islam a source of compassion and progress for all of humanity.

Field research conducted in the Sahabat Ummat Nganjuk Community, with collaborative support from Pertuni (Indonesian Blind Association) Nganjuk Regency, shows how action theology can be implemented through tangible and measurable social da'wah programs. Activities such as mosque-based economic assistance, inclusive da'wah for people with disabilities, and food charity movements show that da'wah can be a means of social empowerment.

Interview data with the Chairman of Pertuni Nganjuk, Mr. Sugeng Dardiri (Interview, September 12, 2025), shows that through an action theology-based da'wah approach, Pertuni members feel more valued, involved, and empowered not only as recipients of assistance but as empowered da'wah partners.

These empirical findings reinforce the survey results showing a 39% increase in social participation among congregations after the implementation of the action da'wah model (see Figure 1 and Table 2 in the results section). This means that action theology effectively increases social piety and collective responsibility among the faithful.

Epistemologically, this study contributes to the development of modern Islamic da'wah philosophy by introducing the concept of 'Transformative Da'wah Theology, an approach that makes theology not only a belief system but also a foundation for social action and the praxis of change. This paradigm enriches the discourse of Islamic Communication Studies with a new perspective that combines theology, sociology, and the praxis of da'wah.

Practically, this research recommends that da'wah institutions, majelis taklim, Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic organizations in Indonesia begin to design action theology-based da'wah models with the following principles:

1. Participatory, da'wah is carried out with the community, not for the community.
2. Inclusive, da'wah reaches out to vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, women, and marginalized communities.
3. Transformative, da'wah is directed at creating sustainable social change, not just increasing religious knowledge.
4. Collaborative, da'wah builds synergy between religious institutions, the government, and civil organizations.

In a global context, action-based theology is also the answer to the spiritual and social crises of the modern era. A world filled with identity conflicts, moral crises, and economic inequality needs a model of preaching that is relevant, solution-oriented, and liberating, not exclusive and rhetorical. Islam, through action theology, offers a humanistic and progressive da'wah paradigm: upholding divine values amid the ever-changing realities of the world.

Finally, this study confirms that action theology in contemporary Islamic da'wah is not only an alternative but a necessity. It is a form of prophetic revitalization of da'wah that carries a mission of liberation, enlightenment, and universal humanity. In the pluralistic context of Indonesia, this paradigm becomes the most relevant da'wah strategy, grounding the values of tawhid, strengthening social solidarity, and presenting a friendly, open, and just face of Islam.

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