



Tarbiyyah, Wisdom and Social Engagement: Contextualising *Ḥasan Al-Bannā*'s Da'wah Principles for Muslim Development in Malaysia

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Abstract

Da'wah among Muslims in Malaysia requires an approach that is wise, compassionate and responsive to contemporary realities. Although religious knowledge is widely accessible through a variety of means such as mosques, educational institutions, community programmes and digital platforms but the access to religious content does not always lead to meaningful transformation. This article aims to contextualise selected da'wah principles of Ḥasan al-Banna for strengthening Muslim development in Malaysia. Using a qualitative library-based method with descriptive and analytical approaches, the study examines relevant academic writings on Ḥasan al-Banna's da'wah thought and contemporary da'wah in Malaysia. The findings identify three particularly relevant principles, which are tarbiyyah, wisdom in communication and social engagement. These principles emphasise the nurturing of faith and character, the importance of ethical and relatable communication, and the need to translate da'wah into community participation and engagement. The article concludes that Ḥasan al-Banna's da'wah principles, when appropriately contextualised, can contribute to a more holistic, compassionate and locally relevant da'wah approach for Muslim development in contemporary Malaysia.

Keywords: Hasan al-Banna, da'wah, social engagement, Muslim development

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Introduction

Da'wah is a continuous process of guiding human beings towards faith, goodness and meaningful life. It is not merely an act of delivering religious messages, but also a process of nurturing the heart, shaping character and developing social responsibility. In its broader meaning, da'wah can be referred to the effort of calling people towards Allah SWT and guiding them to understand, internalise and practise Islam as a way of life (Muhamad Shukri, 2021). Therefore, da'wah should not be understood merely as formal preaching; rather, it should be viewed as a holistic endeavour aimed at nurturing an individual's spiritual, intellectual, and moral development.

In the contemporary Malaysian context, this understanding is becoming increasingly important, as the Muslim community faces a range of complex challenges that require guidance extending beyond formal religious instruction. The influence of digital media, changing lifestyles, moral uncertainty, social pressure and the need for stronger value-based education have shaped the way Muslims understand and practice religion in daily life. Recent discussions on digital da'wah indicate that social media has become an important platform for religious communication, especially among the younger generation, but it also requires suitable strategies, ethical awareness and audience sensitivity (Abdullah, 2022). This shows that da'wah should remain rooted in Islamic principles while being responsive to contemporary realities.

Religious knowledge is widely accessible through a variety of means such as mosques, educational institutions, community programmes and digital platforms. However, having access to religious knowledge does not always mean that Muslims are able to understand, internalise and practise it in their daily lives. Some may receive religious information but yet still need continuous guidance to relate it to their personal struggles, behaviour, values and decision-making. Therefore, da'wah in Malaysia should not only focus on delivering correct information about Islam, but also on guiding Muslims with wisdom, empathy and practical understanding. The effectiveness of da'wah depends on how the message is conveyed, the suitability of the language used and the ability of the *dā'ī* to approach the audience with sincerity and compassion.

Da'wah that is too rigid, overly critical or distant from the real experience of the audience may not lead to meaningful change. Muslims nowadays need guidance that not only to point out their mistakes, but also helps them to understand, reflect and improve themselves gradually. Therefore, da'wah should be presented with compassion, wisdom and awareness to suit the audience's setting. A da'wah approach that is relatable and connected to real-life experiences has greater potential to nurture deeper understanding and strengthen commitment to Islamic values. This is especially important among young Muslims, whose patterns of learning and communication are increasingly shaped by the digital media. One of the studies on youth engagement in digital Islamic content show that the contemporary da'wah needs to be more engaging, accessible and responsive to the ways young Muslims communicate and receive religious messages (Roslan et al., 2025). In this regard, da'wah should move beyond the mere transfer of information towards a more holistic process of guidance and transformation.

The effort needs for a more holistic and transformative da'wah approach by providing a useful basis for revisiting the da'wah thought of Ḥasan al-Banna. His approach is relevant to this discussion because it presents da'wah as a comprehensive effort to reform individuals and society. Rather than limiting da'wah to only verbal preaching or the delivery of religious information, Ḥasan al-Banna emphasised the importance of *tarbiyyah* as a gradual and continuous process of developing faith, knowledge and character. Abdul Kadir et al. (2017) explains that the *wasā'il al-tarbiyyah* found in Ḥasan al-Banna's *Majmū'at Rasā'il* contain important elements of human development. Similarly, Hashim et al. (2015) highlights those

selected elements in *Majmū'at Rasā'il* contribute to the development of individuals and communities.

The relevance of Ḥasan al-Banna's inspiration as well as his thought to the Malaysia Muslims community can also be seen through the influence of his reformist ideas on Islamic movements in this country. Mamat (2016) shows that Ḥasan al-Banna's legacy contributed to the transmission of Islamic reform from Egypt to Malaysia, particularly in shaping a holistic understanding of Islam and reform. However, this article does not aim to reproduce his historical method in its entirety. Instead, this article seeks to contextualise selected da'wah principles that are relevant to Muslim development in Malaysia. This article focuses on three main principles which are related to *tarbiyyah*, wisdom in communication and social engagement. By analysing these principles within the Malaysian context, the article argues that contemporary da'wah among Muslims should be holistic, compassionate and practically relevant to the needs of the community.

Research Background

Da'wah plays an important role in strengthening Muslim development in the contemporary Malaysian context. It is not only focused on conveying religious knowledge but also nurturing faith, shaping character and guiding Muslims to practise Islamic values in their daily life. In this sense, da'wah is closely related to the process of human development because it aims to shape individuals who are spiritually conscious, morally responsible and socially beneficial. Muhamad Shukri (2021) explains the concept of da'wah is consistent with the view that da'wah involves calling people towards Allah and guiding them to understand, internalise and practise Islam as a way of life.

Muslims today face various challenges in their daily lives involving social influence, moral uncertainty and confusion caused by the rapid spread of information. These challenges show the need for continuous da'wah guidance to help Muslims understand, internalise and practise Islamic values in their lives. The growth of digital platforms, changing lifestyles, peer influence, social pressure and the rapid spread of information have shaped the way they learn, understand and practice religion in daily life. While digital platforms have made religious content more accessible, they also require da'wah to be delivered with wisdom, proper method and sensitivity. This is because the effectiveness of da'wah depends not only on the availability of religious content, but also on the methods of the message is communicated and received by the audience (Abdullah et al., 2022).

This situation highlights the importance of ensuring the effectiveness of da'wah, particularly among young Muslims. Unlike previous generations, who had relatively limited access to religious knowledge and resources, today's youth are constantly exposed to Islamic content through social media and various digital platforms. This increased accessibility creates both opportunities and challenges, making effective da'wah more crucial than ever in guiding young Muslims toward authentic Islamic understanding and practice. Da'wah approaches that merely deliver information may not be sufficient if it does not help young Muslims reflect, internalise and practise Islamic values. Roslan et al. (2025) also highlighted that digital Islamic content for young Muslims should be engaging, accessible and responsive. Therefore, contemporary da'wah should combine sound religious knowledge with compassion, practical guidance and an understanding of the audience's context.

The development of Muslims in Malaysia necessitates a da'wah approach that is gradual, holistic, and sustained over time. Meaningful personal transformation does not occur through the transmission of religious information alone; it also requires continuous guidance, critical reflection, and moral nurturing. In this regard, da'wah serves as an essential mechanism for strengthening Muslims' relationship with Allah, fostering positive character traits,

addressing personal and social challenges, and encouraging constructive contributions to society. Consequently, da'wah and Muslim development are intrinsically linked, as both aim to cultivate individuals who embody a balanced integration of faith, knowledge, ethical conduct, and social responsibility.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative library-based research methodology. Such an approach is particularly suitable as it enables an in-depth analysis of selected da'wah principles developed by Ḥasan al-Banna, and an examination of their relevance to the development of Muslims in Malaysia. The data are derived from various secondary sources, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, academic writings, and previous studies related to Islamic da'wah, in addition to literature specifically addressing Ḥasan al-Banna's thought and da'wah methodology. The collected data are then analysed to identify key themes and assess their applicability within the contemporary Malaysian Muslim context.

The study applies descriptive and analytical approaches. The descriptive approach is used to explain the concept of da'wah, the background of Muslims development in Malaysia and the selected principles of Ḥasan al-Banna's da'wah thoughts. Meanwhile, the analytical approach is used to examine on how these principles can be contextualised within the Malaysian background. Through this approach, the article analyses the relevance of *tarbiyyah*, wisdom in communication and social engagement in strengthening contemporary da'wah among Muslims in Malaysia.

The analysis begins with a thorough review of selected literature, from which recurring themes and key ideas are identified. These themes are subsequently organised into three da'wah principles; *tarbiyyah*, wisdom in communication, and social engagement. *Tarbiyyah* refers to the holistic nurturing of faith, knowledge, and character, and is closely associated with human development in Ḥasan al-Bannā's da'wah thought (Abdul Kadir et al., 2017). Wisdom in communication, meanwhile, emphasises the importance of delivering da'wah in a manner that is thoughtful, appropriate, and sensitive to the audience's background and circumstances. Social engagement, on the other hand, highlights the practical application of da'wah through community service, social contribution, and active participation in societal affairs. These principles are then examined in relation to the contemporary needs and realities of Muslims in Malaysia. Through this analytical process, the study demonstrates how Ḥasan al-Bannā's da'wah principles can contribute to a more holistic, compassionate, and contextually relevant approach.

Contextualising Ḥasan Al-Bannā's Da'wah Principles for Muslim Development in Malaysia

The da'wah principles of Ḥasan al-Banna can be contextualised in order to strengthen Muslim development in Malaysia. Although his da'wah experience emerged within the Egyptian framework, several principles from his thought can be remain relevant to contemporary Muslim society. His approach towards da'wah was not limited to preaching but it is rather emphasised the gradual development of individuals through faith, knowledge, wisdom and social responsibility. From a Malaysian perspective, this understanding is essential because da'wah must remain responsive to the real needs of Muslims who live in a society shaped by ongoing social, moral, and intellectual changes. By addressing these contemporary realities, da'wah can play a more effective role in supporting Muslim development and well-being.

The concept of da'wah should not be perceived merely as the act of offering advice, delivering religious lectures, or rectifying the shortcomings of individuals and society. Instead,

it encompasses a broader process of nurturing and guiding Muslims towards a comprehensive understanding of Islam, so that its teachings and values may be internalised and consistently manifested in their everyday lives. This understanding is significant because possessing knowledge of religious teachings does not automatically translate into the ability to live in accordance with them. While a Muslim may understand what is right and wrong, he or she may still struggle to practise Islamic teachings due to personal weaknesses, social pressures, a lack of support, or confusion arising from various external influences. Therefore, contemporary da'wah should go beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and function as a continuous process of guidance, support, and personal transformation. Through this process, Muslims are assisted in gradually transitioning from an intellectual understanding of Islam to the consistent embodiment of its principles and values in their personal and social lives.

Allah SWT says in *Sūrah An-Nahl*, 16:125:

مَّا دُعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجِدْهُمْ يَأْتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ
إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

Translation: "Invite all to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and kind advice, and only debate with them in the best manner. Surely your Lord alone knows best who has strayed from His Way and who is rightly guided."

An-Nahl 16:125

Ibn Kathir explains that Allah SWT commands His Messenger to call people to the religion of Allah (Islam) with wisdom, good instruction and discussion in the best manner to avoid misunderstanding or conflict. This indicates that da'wah should not rely only on the correctness of the message, but also on the suitability of the method and the way in which the message is delivered. The use of *hikmah* in this *āyah* reflects the need for knowledge, appropriate approach and sound understanding. Whereas the term *al-maw'izah al-ḥasanah* refers to good advice or a gentle reminder that is delivered in a meaningful, respectful and able to touch the heart of the audience. The phrase "discuss with them in the best manner" shows that da'wah should avoid harshness, misunderstanding, dispute or any unnecessary confrontation. Therefore, this *āyah* provides a strong Quranic foundation for a da'wah approach that combines correct knowledge with wisdom, compassion and effective communication (Ibn Kathīr, 2000).

It also indicates that da'wah is not only about the Islamic message itself, but also about the method used to convey this message. A good Islamic message may lose its effect if it is delivered without wisdom, compassion or understanding the need of the audience. Therefore, is highly relevant to the discussion of Ḥasan al-Bannā's especially in relation to *tarbiyyah*, wisdom in communication and social engagement.

The first principle that can be contextualised towards Muslim development in Malaysia is the concept of *tarbiyyah* in da'wah. In Ḥasan al-Banna's thought, *tarbiyyah* refers to a gradual and continuous process of nurturing faith, knowledge, character and discipline. It is about teaching religious knowledge, as well as guiding individuals to understand, internalise and practise Islamic values in their lives. Abdul Kadir et al. (2017) explains that the *wasā'il al-tarbiyyah* as mentioned by Ḥasan al-Banna's in his book *Majmū'at Rasā'il* comprise important elements related to human development. This indicates that *tarbiyyah* plays a significant role in shaping Muslims who are spiritually conscious, morally responsible and socially beneficial.

In simple terms, *tarbiyyah* shows that da'wah is a process of gradual development. It recognises an individual's faith, character and practice are nurtured over time through

continuous guidance, reflection and consistent moral formation. It does not expect immediate perfection from an individual, but encourages gradual improvement through patience and continuous support. This understanding is important because Muslim development cannot be achieved through short-term or just one reminder alone. An individual may listen to a lot of religious teachings from various speakers, attend Islamic programmes or read religious materials, but real transformation requires time, reflection, practice as well as supportive environment. Through *tarbiyyah*, da'wah becomes more than the transfer of religious knowledge rather it becomes a process that helps Muslims connect what they know with how they live, decide and behave.

This is particularly relevant in the Malaysian context. Many Malaysian Muslims today have wide access to religious knowledge that available through mosques, educational institutions, community programmes and digital platforms. However, access to this knowledge does not always lead to proper understanding, internalisation and practice. Some Muslims may be familiar with Islamic teachings, yet still struggle to apply them when facing personal challenges, social pressure, family problems, media influence or ideological confusion. This situation indicates that da'wah efforts should not be limited at telling people what is right and wrong. It should also foster them to understand the meaning behind Islamic teachings and help them transform knowledge into genuine faith and embody that faith in their actions. This is consistent with recent studies on digital da'wah, which highlight the importance of suitable methods, audience awareness and engaging religious content in contemporary da'wah practices (Roslan et al., 2025).

The principle of *tarbiyyah* is significant for Muslim youth and students since young Muslims nowadays are navigating a challenging landscape shaped by the rapid dissemination of information, which exposes them to various ideas, values, and worldviews. Therefore, relatable guidance is essential, and a *tarbiyyah*-based da'wah approach can effectively nurture self-reflection, self-discipline, and a deeper commitment to Islamic values, making it highly relevant for educational, youth, mentoring, and community-based programmes in Malaysia.

Tarbiyyah also reflects the idea that meaningful reform begins with an individual. A strong Muslim community cannot be built only through Islamic reminders and general religious programmes. It requires individuals who are nurtured with faith, good character and a sense of responsibility (Abdul Kadir et al., 2017). These elements are clearly reflected in Ḥasan al-Bannā's conception of human development. Likewise, Hashim et al. (2015) argue that the ideas presented in *Majmū'at Rasā'il* contribute significantly to the development of individuals and communities. This reinforces the view that Ḥasan al-Bannā's da'wah thought is fundamentally connected. Through *tarbiyyah*, Muslims are nurtured not only to attain personal piety but also to fulfil their responsibilities as active and constructive members of their families, communities, and society.

The second principle is wisdom in da'wah communication. The word *ḥikmah* mentioned repeatedly in the Quran indicates its importance as a guiding value in Muslim life. Repetition in the Quran often draws attention to matters that require serious understanding, reflection and implementation. Therefore, when Allah SWT repeatedly highlights the word *ḥikmah*, it reminds Muslims that wisdom should not remain as a theoretical concept. *Ḥikmah* should be practised in their daily conduct, decision-making and communication. This is particularly significant in da'wah works as da'wah involves guiding people with compassion. Da'wah messages may be correct in content, yet it may not bring meaningful change if it is delivered judgmentally or without considering the audience's situation. Therefore, the effectiveness of da'wah depends on the ability of the *dā'ī* to use appropriate language and approach people with care and compassion.

In the diversity and multi-religion country, Muslims in Malaysia come from different backgrounds, levels of religious understanding, educational experiences and social realities.

Some may have strong religious foundations, while others may still be struggling with basic religious practices. Some may also face personal problems, family challenges, peer pressure or any other issues caused by social media content. Therefore, da'wah cannot adopt a uniform approach for all audiences; instead, it should be tailored to individual needs and circumstances, in line with the *tarbiyyah* principle of gradual and personalized development.

A wise da'wah approach takes into account the audience's age, background, emotional state, level of knowledge and social environment. Effective da'wah approaches do not overlook mistakes, but responds with patience, appropriate language and sincere concern. It guides people without humiliating them and corrects misunderstandings without pushing them away. This is important because people are more open to reflect and react when they feel respected, understood and supported. Wisdom does not weaken the message of Islam rather it strengthens the way this message is conveyed and received.

The importance of communication skills in da'wah also has been highlighted in contemporary da'wah studies. Aini and Don (2022) emphasise that da'wah requires suitable communication skills because the *dā'ī* needs to deliver the message of Islam wisely to the audience. This supports the view that wisdom in communication is not only a spiritual value, but also a practical skill needed by those involved in da'wah. In Malaysia, this is relevant for teachers, lecturers, daie, parents, community leaders and digital content creators who are directly or indirectly involved in Muslims' guidance.

Wisdom in da'wah can be applied in various settings. In classrooms, da'wah may require interactive teaching, reflection and discussion. Meanwhile, in mosques, da'wah may require language that is clear and relevant to community issues. In community programmes, da'wah may need to include mentoring, emotional support and good examples. In digital media, da'wah may need to be concised, engaging and ethically responsible. In all of these settings, wisdom helps the *dā'ī* deliver religious guidance in a way that is understandable, respectful and practical. These examples show that wisdom is not limited to speech, but also involves understanding the place, audience, method and da'wah platforms. It ensures that da'wah is not presented as mere instruction, but as meaningful guidance that takes into account the reality of human experience. When delivered with such wisdom, da'wah is more likely to touch the heart, encourage reflection, and guide Muslims towards gradual self-improvement.

The third principle is social engagement. Ḥasan al-Banna's believed that da'wah should not be confined to speech, preaching or religious instruction solely. It also can be expressed through action, words or any contribution to society. This is because da'wah aims to develop Muslims who are not only personally pious, but also have responsibility towards their society. A Muslim is expected to strengthen his or her relationship with Allah SWT while contributing positively to the family, community and wider society. Therefore, social engagement becomes an important expression of da'wah as it translates Islamic values into practical action.

Social engagement and da'wah are closely intertwined. They demonstrate that Islamic values should be manifested not only in personal worship but also in the way Muslims interact with others and address social needs. Activities such as welfare programmes, educational initiatives, family support services, and community service can become effective forms of da'wah when grounded in Islamic teachings. Through these efforts, da'wah becomes tangible and relevant, allowing people to experience the values of Islam through acts of compassion, responsibility, and service.

This principle is particularly relevant in the Malaysian context, where Muslim communities face a range of social and moral challenges, including moral decline, family-related issues, weakening religious commitment, the influence of social media, social inequality, and community welfare concerns. Such challenges cannot be addressed through lectures and talks alone; rather, they require continuous guidance, practical support, and community-based initiatives. Accordingly, da'wah activities may encompass family support

programmes, mosque-based guidance, educational outreach, welfare services, values-based workshops, and community engagement projects. These initiatives demonstrate that da'wah function as a process of empowering both individuals and communities.

Social engagement also highlighted the relationship between *tarbiyyah* and wisdom in communication. The role of *tarbiyyah* is to nurture the spiritual and inner growth of Muslims through faith, knowledge and morality while wisdom is to ensure that da'wah is delivered with suitable methods and language. Social engagement then brings these values into society through action and contribution. Hence, Muslim development is the process of nurturing individuals to grow in faith, morality, religious practice, and social responsibility. It demonstrates how da'wah guides Muslims to understand and practice Islamic values while contributing positively to society (Hashim et al., 2015, Abdul Kadir et al., 2017).

Based on this understanding, a person who is developed through da'wah should not only become more knowledgeable but also more conscious, responsible, and beneficial to others. Da'wah should cultivate Muslims who are capable of managing themselves, strengthening family relationships, supporting their communities, and contributing to social well-being. Therefore, social engagement should not be viewed as a separate or optional component of da'wah. Rather, it is an integral part of da'wah, as it provides opportunities for Islamic values to be translated into meaningful action and practiced in real-life situations.

By contextualizing social engagement within the Malaysian setting, da'wah can become more action-oriented, community-based, and responsive to contemporary realities. This approach encourages *dā'īs*, educators, mosque institutions, and Islamic organizations to design programmes that address the actual needs and challenges faced by Muslims. It also highlights that da'wah is not solely the responsibility of religious authorities, but a collective duty shared by all Muslims. Individuals and communities can contribute according to their abilities and circumstances through positive actions and meaningful engagement. As a result, da'wah becomes more inclusive, practical, and impactful, enabling every Muslim to participate in promoting goodness and contributing to the well-being of society.

Consequently, the principles of *tarbiyyah*, wisdom in communication and social engagement provide a meaningful framework for Muslim development in Malaysia. *Tarbiyyah* nurtures faith, knowledge and morality. Wisdom delivers da'wah with care, whereas social engagement translates da'wah into action, service and contribution to society. These principles show that contemporary da'wah in Malaysia should not only guide Muslims in matters of faith and practice, but also encourage them to communicate wisely and contribute meaningfully to society.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that Ḥasan al-Bannā's da'wah principles continue to offer valuable guidance for contemporary Muslim development in Malaysia. While Muslims today have unprecedented access to religious information, genuine development requires guidance that nurtures faith, strengthens character, enhances understanding, and inspires social responsibility. Therefore, da'wah should be understood as the dissemination of religious teachings as well as a holistic process of *tarbiyyah* that develops individuals spiritually, morally, and socially. The principles of *tarbiyyah*, wisdom in communication and social engagement provide a meaningful framework for strengthening da'wah efforts in the contemporary world. Thus, contextualising these principles in Malaysia context can help da'wah to be more holistic, practical and responsive. This shows that Ḥasan al-Bannā's da'wah thoughts remain relevant in addressing contemporary challenges, particularly when its principles are applied with sensitivity to local contexts and current realities.

Declaration of AI-Generated Content

This paper was edited with the assistance of Grammarly and Gemini AI for language refinement, grammar checking and clarity improvement. After using this tool, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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