

Communication Revolution In Islamic Preaching In The City Of Sorong: A Humanistic Approach

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Received: 10-04-2026

Accepted: 05-05-2026

Published: 30-06-2026

Abstract: The rapid development of communication technology and increasing social diversity have transformed Islamic preaching (da'wah) in Indonesia, requiring preachers to adopt humanistic, inclusive, and persuasive communication. This study examines the communication revolution in Islamic preaching in Sorong City, Southwest Papua, Indonesia, using a qualitative descriptive approach. Conducted from January 2024 to December 2025, the research involved observations of Friday sermons and Ramadan lectures in 100 mosques, complemented by in-depth interviews with 20 respondents comprising ten mosque administrators and ten congregational members from ten selected mosques. The findings indicate that most preachers employed humanistic communication characterized by audience acceptance, contextual explanations, and mastery of religious topics. However, a small number continued to use traditional one-way communication and emotionally charged expressions regarding religious diversity. Congregational members generally appreciated the speakers' knowledge but emphasized the need for continuous training to improve communication skills, audience engagement, and moderation in religious discourse. The study concludes that strengthening humanistic communication and communication competence is essential for promoting inclusive Islamic preaching and fostering peaceful coexistence in multicultural communities such as Sorong City.

Keywords: Da'wah communication, Humanistic communication, Islamic preaching, mosque communication, Sorong City

INTRODUCTION

Islamic preaching (da'wah) has historically served as one of the most influential forms of communication within Muslim societies. Beyond transmitting religious teachings, da'wah functions as an educational, social, cultural, and moral instrument that guides individuals toward ethical behaviour and collective welfare. Throughout Islamic history, successful preachers have adapted their communication methods according to the characteristics of their audiences, social environments, and contemporary challenges (Mas'udi, 2023; and Febrianti & Rahmat, 2025). In the twenty-first century, however, rapid technological advancement, globalization, digital communication, and increasingly pluralistic societies have fundamentally transformed public expectations regarding religious communication (Satir & Akidah, Sri, 2025; and Sofiar et al., 2025). Consequently, effective da'wah today requires not only strong theological knowledge but also excellent communication competence grounded in empathy, dialogue, and respect for diversity (Khairifa et al., 2025; Tang et al., 2018; Muhammad, 2025; and Tolapa et al., 2025).

Communication scholars increasingly emphasize that effective public communication depends upon audience-centred approaches rather than one-directional information transfer. Humanistic communication places human dignity,

mutual understanding, emotional intelligence, openness, empathy, and respect at the centre of interpersonal interaction (Manshur & Munif, 2023; Hartono & Anggriawan, 2025; and Taufiq, 2026). Within Islamic teaching, these principles correspond closely with the Qur'anic guidance to invite people through wisdom (*hikmah*), good instruction (*mau'idzah hasanah*), and constructive dialogue (*mujadalah billati hiya ahsan*). Therefore, contemporary Islamic preaching should integrate both religious authenticity and modern communication principles to remain relevant in multicultural societies (Fatmawati, 2021; Muhammad, 2025; and Junaidin, 2025).

Indonesia provides a unique context for examining the transformation of Islamic preaching because of its remarkable cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity (Febrianti & Rahmat, 2025; Nur, Syamsudin; Ernas, 2025; and Demirkoparan, 2025). As the world's largest Muslim-majority country, Indonesia has continuously promoted religious moderation, social harmony, and peaceful coexistence among different communities. In this context, mosques function not only as places of worship but also as centres of education, community development, and religious communication (Hidayat, Eka Rahmat; Hasim, Danuri; Yanuar, 2018; Abu-Ras et al., 2024; and Alhamid et al., 2025). Friday sermons and Ramadan lectures remain among the most influential platforms through which religious values are disseminated to Muslim communities.

Sorong City, located in Southwest Papua, represents one of Indonesia's most multicultural urban centres (Alhamid et al., 2025). Muslims coexist with Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, and indigenous communities within a dynamic social environment characterized by ethnic diversity and cultural interaction. Such diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for Islamic preaching (Tang et al., 2018; Manshur & Munif, 2023; and Basri et al., 2025). On one hand, preachers are expected to strengthen Islamic understanding among Muslim congregations. On the other hand, they must communicate religious messages in ways that maintain social cohesion and mutual respect among diverse communities. Consequently, communication style becomes as important as theological content in determining the effectiveness of da'wah (Basri et al., 2025; Pengembangan et al., 2018; Musaddad & Sewang, 2025; and Sony Eko Adisaputro et al., 2021).

Recent developments indicate that many Indonesian preachers have begun adopting more interactive, contextual, and humanistic communication strategies. They increasingly employ practical examples, everyday language, storytelling, humour, and community-oriented discussions to enhance audience engagement. These approaches reflect a broader communication revolution in religious preaching, moving away from authoritarian monologues toward participatory and persuasive communication (Febrianti & Rahmat, 2025; and Nur, Syamsudin; Ernas, 2025). Nevertheless, this transformation has not been universally adopted. Some preachers continue to rely heavily on conventional lecture methods characterized by limited interaction, lengthy theological exposition, or emotionally charged statements concerning religious and social issues. Such communication may reduce audience engagement and, in certain contexts, contribute to misunderstanding or social polarization (Subowo, 2026).

Previous studies have explored various aspects of Islamic communication, including digital da'wah, communication ethics, religious moderation, and persuasive communication. Other scholars have examined mosque-based education and public religious discourse (Ahmad Amir Aziz & Miftahul Huda, 2024); and

(Alhamid et al., 2025). However, relatively few empirical studies have specifically investigated how humanistic communication is practiced during routine mosque preaching within multicultural regions of Eastern Indonesia (Hartono & Anggriawan, 2025). Moreover, limited research has systematically combined long-term observations across numerous mosques with perspectives from both mosque administrators and congregational members (Pahlevi et al., 2025). This gap is particularly evident in Sorong City, where multicultural interaction significantly shapes religious communication.

The present study addresses these research gaps by examining the communication practices of Islamic preachers across one hundred mosques in Sorong City over a two-year observation period. Rather than focusing exclusively on theological content, this research analyses how communication approaches influence audience acceptance and perceptions. The study integrates the perspectives of mosque administrators, who regularly organize religious activities, with those of congregational members, who directly experience preaching practices. Such triangulation provides a comprehensive understanding of contemporary da'wah communication (Ipa Salma Alhamid; Indria Nur; Hasbullah, 2024; and Mardiah, et.al. 2025).

The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by extending the application of humanistic communication theory within Islamic preaching studies. Practically, the study offers evidence-based recommendations for mosque management, Islamic organizations, and preacher development programs concerning communication competence, religious moderation, and audience engagement (Maulidiya, Tri Wahyudi Ramdhan, 2026). Furthermore, the research supports Indonesia's broader efforts to strengthen peaceful religious communication within multicultural societies through inclusive and human-centred preaching practices.

Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How are humanistic communication principles implemented by Islamic preachers during Friday sermons and Ramadan lectures in Sorong City? (2) How do mosque administrators and congregational members perceive the communication approaches employed by preachers? and (3) What communication improvements are needed to strengthen effective and inclusive Islamic preaching within a multicultural community?

By addressing these questions, the study demonstrates that the ongoing communication revolution in Islamic preaching extends beyond technological advancement. More fundamentally, it represents a transformation toward communication that is empathetic, dialogical, persuasive, culturally responsive, and grounded in universal Islamic values of compassion and respect for humanity.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the communication revolution in Islamic preaching in Sorong City, Southwest Papua, Indonesia (Miles, 2014). The research was conducted from January 2024 to December 2025. Data were collected through direct observations and in-depth interviews to obtain a comprehensive understanding of contemporary da'wah communication practices. Observations were carried out in 100 mosques during Friday sermons and Ramadan lectures between the Maghrib and Isya prayers. The observations focused

on the preachers' communication styles, delivery techniques, audience engagement, and the use of humanistic communication principles.

To enrich the findings, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 respondents from ten purposively selected mosques, representing four large mosques, three medium-sized mosques, and three small mosques. The respondents consisted of ten mosque administrators (*pengurus masjid*) and ten congregational members (*jama'ah*). The interviews explored participants' perceptions of the communication approaches used by preachers, including message clarity, mastery of religious topics, audience acceptance, and recommendations for improving da'wah communication. Data were analysed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data triangulation through observations and interviews enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell, 2018; and Ishtiaq, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Results

The results of this study are based on observations conducted in 100 mosques in Sorong City from January 2024 to December 2025 during Friday sermons and Ramadan lectures between the Maghrib and Isya prayers. To strengthen the observational data, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 respondents comprising ten mosque administrators (*pengurus masjid*) and ten congregational members (*jama'ah*) from ten selected mosques. The selected mosques represented four large mosques, three medium-sized mosques, and three small mosques, allowing the researcher to capture variations in preaching practices across different congregational settings.

a. Humanistic Communication Dominates Islamic Preaching

The observations revealed that the majority of preachers have shifted from conventional preaching toward a more humanistic communication approach. Most speakers demonstrated the ability to explain Islamic teachings using simple, understandable language while adjusting the content to the educational and social backgrounds of the congregation. Rather than relying solely on textual explanations, they frequently incorporated practical examples drawn from everyday family life, business ethics, social interaction, youth education, and community responsibility. This communication style encouraged greater audience attention and created a more meaningful learning atmosphere during religious gatherings.

Many Friday sermons emphasized Islamic values such as honesty, social justice, mutual assistance, religious moderation, respect for parents, and environmental responsibility. Likewise, Ramadan lectures frequently discussed fasting, sincerity, charity, self-improvement, family harmony, and community solidarity. These topics were delivered through persuasive rather than confrontational communication, allowing congregational members to understand the practical relevance of Islamic teachings in their daily lives.

Observation data further indicated that successful preachers generally maintained good eye contact, appropriate voice intonation, and logical organization of sermon materials. They also demonstrated confidence and mastery of the topics presented, enabling audiences to remain attentive throughout the sermon. Such communication characteristics reflected the growing adoption of audience-centred

preaching rather than traditional one-way religious instruction.

b. Perceptions of Mosque Administrators

The interviews with ten mosque administrators confirmed the observational findings. Almost all administrators stated that most invited preachers possessed adequate religious knowledge and communicated effectively with their congregations. They emphasized that speakers generally prepared their sermon materials according to current religious occasions, including Friday worship, Ramadan activities, Islamic holidays, and contemporary social issues affecting Muslim communities.

One mosque administrator explained:

"Most of our invited speakers prepare their materials carefully before delivering sermons. They explain Islamic teachings clearly and connect them with the daily experiences of our congregation, making the messages easier to understand."

Another administrator stated:

"The congregation prefers speakers who communicate calmly, respectfully, and persuasively rather than those who simply deliver lengthy religious lectures."

Despite these positive assessments, several administrators acknowledged that a limited number of preachers still employed conventional preaching methods. These speakers tended to deliver long monologues with minimal audience engagement and relied heavily on textual quotations without contextual explanations. As a result, younger audiences appeared less interested and sometimes found it difficult to relate religious teachings to contemporary life.

Furthermore, several administrators expressed concern regarding a few speakers who occasionally delivered emotional statements concerning religious diversity. Although these cases were relatively rare, administrators believed that such communication should be minimized because Sorong City is characterized by multicultural and multireligious communities that require harmonious social relationships.

c. Perceptions of Congregational Members

The perspectives of congregational members generally supported those expressed by mosque administrators. Five of the ten respondents stated that most preachers demonstrated strong mastery of Islamic knowledge and communicated religious teachings effectively. According to these respondents, the most appreciated sermons were those that provided practical guidance for everyday life while avoiding unnecessarily complicated theological debates.

One congregational member commented:

"We enjoy sermons that discuss problems we actually face, such as family relationships, business ethics, raising children, and maintaining good relations with neighbours."

Three congregational members suggested that some preachers should receive additional communication training. Although they acknowledged the speakers' religious competence, they believed that several preachers needed to improve their public speaking skills, voice projection, audience interaction, and presentation techniques.

One respondent explained:

"Some ustadz have excellent religious knowledge, but the delivery is monotonous. Better communication skills would make their sermons much more interesting and easier to understand."

Meanwhile, two respondents expressed concern about the occasional use of emotionally charged or radical statements by a small number of speakers. These respondents believed that such expressions were inconsistent with the social realities of Sorong City, where Muslims live peacefully alongside followers of other religions. One participant stated:

"Islam teaches peace and respect. Therefore, preachers should avoid emotional language that could create misunderstanding among different religious communities."

d. Overall Findings

Overall, the findings indicate that Islamic preaching in Sorong City has experienced a positive communication transformation. The majority of preachers have adopted humanistic communication characterized by empathy, clarity, contextual explanations, and persuasive message delivery. These communication practices have enhanced audience acceptance and strengthened the educational role of mosques.

However, the findings also identify several areas requiring improvement. A small number of preachers continue to rely on traditional lecture-based communication and occasionally use emotional rhetoric regarding religious diversity. Both mosque administrators and congregational members emphasized the importance of continuous professional development to improve communication competence. Suggested training areas include sermon preparation, public speaking, interpersonal communication, audience engagement, conflict-sensitive preaching, and religious moderation.

The consistency between observational findings and interview responses demonstrates that the communication revolution in Islamic preaching within Sorong City is already underway. While theological competence remains fundamental, respondents consistently emphasized that effective da'wah increasingly depends on communication skills that are humanistic, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of multicultural communities. These findings suggest that future preacher development programs should integrate religious scholarship with modern communication competencies to ensure that Islamic preaching continues to contribute positively to social harmony and community development.

e. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Islamic preaching in Sorong City is experiencing a significant communication revolution characterized by a gradual transition from conventional, preacher-centred communication to a more humanistic, audience-oriented approach. This transformation is evident not only in the communication techniques employed by most preachers but also in the positive perceptions expressed by mosque administrators and congregational members. The results suggest that effective contemporary da'wah extends beyond the accurate transmission of Islamic knowledge; it increasingly depends on the preacher's ability to communicate religious messages through empathy, persuasion, contextualization, and respect for social diversity.

The dominance of humanistic communication observed in this study supports the principles of Humanistic Communication Theory, which emphasizes openness, empathy, mutual respect, dialogue, and audience participation. Unlike traditional communication models that position the speaker as the sole source of authority,

humanistic communication encourages interaction that acknowledges the experiences and needs of listeners. The majority of preachers observed in this study successfully implemented these principles by presenting Islamic teachings through understandable language, relevant examples, and practical solutions to everyday social problems. Their sermons demonstrated that communication effectiveness is closely related to the ability to establish emotional and intellectual connections with the audience rather than simply delivering religious doctrines.

One important finding is that most preachers mastered their sermon materials and adjusted them to contemporary issues affecting Muslim communities. During Friday sermons and Ramadan lectures, religious messages frequently addressed family relationships, business ethics, youth morality, social responsibility, charitable activities, environmental awareness, and community solidarity. These topics reflect the changing expectations of Muslim congregations, who increasingly seek practical religious guidance that can be applied in everyday life. This finding is consistent with contemporary da'wah literature, which argues that effective preaching should be contextual, solution-oriented, and responsive to social change rather than focusing exclusively on theological explanations.

The communication strategies observed also demonstrate the implementation of persuasive communication principles. Rather than employing fear-based rhetoric or authoritarian instruction, most speakers invited congregational members to reflect upon Islamic values through logical arguments, stories from the Qur'an and Hadith, and examples drawn from daily experience. Such approaches correspond to the Qur'anic command to invite others through wisdom (*hikmah*), good instruction (*mau'idzah hasanah*), and respectful dialogue (*mujadalah billati hiya ahsan*). Consequently, the findings indicate that humanistic communication is not merely a modern communication concept but also reflects the fundamental principles of Islamic preaching itself.

The positive evaluations provided by mosque administrators further strengthen this conclusion. As individuals responsible for organizing religious activities, mosque administrators possess extensive experience in observing audience responses to different preaching styles. Their assessment that most preachers communicate effectively indicates that communication competence has become an important criterion in evaluating religious leadership. Administrators particularly appreciated speakers who prepared their materials systematically, communicated calmly, and related Islamic teachings to contemporary social realities. These findings suggest that successful da'wah requires not only theological expertise but also careful preparation and communication planning.

Similarly, congregational members emphasized that sermons became more meaningful when preachers discussed issues directly relevant to their daily lives. Respondents expressed appreciation for sermons addressing family harmony, parenting, economic ethics, education, and social responsibility because these subjects enabled them to integrate Islamic teachings into practical decision-making. This finding reflects the audience-centred nature of humanistic communication, where message relevance significantly influences audience attention, understanding, and acceptance. It also demonstrates that modern Muslim audiences prefer communication that provides practical guidance rather than abstract doctrinal discussions.

Despite these positive developments, the study also identified several

communication challenges. A limited number of preachers continue to employ conventional lecture-based approaches characterized by lengthy monologues, minimal audience engagement, and excessive dependence on textual explanation. Such communication reflects the classical transmission model, in which audiences function primarily as passive recipients of information. While this approach may effectively convey religious content, it is generally less successful in maintaining audience attention or encouraging meaningful reflection. Contemporary communication theory emphasizes that effective learning occurs when audiences actively construct meaning through interaction and contextual understanding. Therefore, the persistence of one-way preaching indicates that communication training remains necessary for some religious speakers.

Another significant finding concerns the occasional use of emotionally charged statements regarding religious diversity. Although only a small number of respondents identified this issue, its implications are particularly important within the multicultural context of Sorong City. Southwest Papua is characterized by considerable ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, where Muslims coexist peacefully with Christian, Catholics, Hindus, Buddhist, and indigenous communities. In such an environment, emotionally provocative religious communication has the potential to generate misunderstanding, reinforce social stereotypes, and weaken interreligious trust. Conversely, inclusive communication promotes peaceful coexistence while strengthening the image of Islam as a religion of mercy, compassion, and justice.

These findings strongly support Indonesia's national policy on religious moderation, which encourages religious leaders to promote tolerance, mutual respect, and social harmony without compromising Islamic principles. Humanistic preaching does not reduce religious commitment; instead, it communicates Islamic teachings through ethical dialogue, wisdom, and compassion. This approach reflects the Prophet Muhammad's communication style, which emphasized kindness, patience, and gradual persuasion rather than confrontation. Therefore, strengthening humanistic communication among preachers contributes simultaneously to religious education and national social cohesion

.The recommendation expressed by three congregational members regarding communication training is also highly significant. Their responses indicate that theological knowledge alone is insufficient for contemporary da'wah. Effective preaching requires integrated competencies that include public speaking, interpersonal communication, emotional intelligence, audience analysis, voice management, storytelling, and conflict-sensitive communication. Continuous professional development programs could therefore improve preacher effectiveness while ensuring that religious messages remain relevant to changing social conditions. Islamic universities, mosque councils, and religious organizations should collaborate in designing training programs that integrate Islamic scholarship with modern communication science.

The communication revolution identified in this study should therefore be understood as a transformation in communication philosophy rather than merely a technological advancement. While digital media have expanded opportunities for da'wah, the core finding of this research demonstrates that successful preaching depends fundamentally on communication quality. Humanistic communication enables preachers to build trust, encourage dialogue, strengthen audience

participation, and promote positive behavioral change. These outcomes are particularly valuable in multicultural societies, where religious communication contributes directly to social stability and peaceful coexistence.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing literature on Islamic communication by demonstrating that the effectiveness of contemporary da'wah depends on balancing theological competence with communication competence. The experience of Sorong City illustrates that humanistic communication has become an essential characteristic of successful Islamic preaching in multicultural communities. Although some preachers still require improvement in communication style and moderation, the overall trend indicates a positive transformation toward inclusive, persuasive, and audience-centred religious communication. Future research may extend these findings by examining digital preaching platforms, audience satisfaction across different age groups, or the effectiveness of communication training programs for Islamic preachers in other multicultural regions of Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Islamic preaching in Sorong City has undergone a significant communication transformation from conventional, preacher-centered delivery toward a more humanistic and audience-oriented approach. Based on observations conducted in 100 mosques and interviews with mosque administrators and congregational members, most preachers were found to communicate Islamic teachings through persuasive, contextual, and inclusive methods supported by adequate mastery of religious knowledge. These communication practices have enhanced audience acceptance and strengthened the educational role of mosques within the multicultural society of Sorong City.

Despite these positive developments, the findings also reveal that a small number of preachers continue to employ traditional one-way communication and occasionally use emotionally charged expressions regarding religious diversity. Both mosque administrators and congregational members emphasized the importance of improving communication competence, particularly in public speaking, audience engagement, and the application of religious moderation in preaching.

The study concludes that the communication revolution in Islamic preaching is characterized not only by changes in communication media but also by the adoption of humanistic values that emphasize empathy, dialogue, and respect for diversity. Strengthening communication skills through continuous training will enable preachers to deliver more effective, inclusive, and socially relevant da'wah while promoting religious harmony and peaceful coexistence in multicultural communities.

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