

The phenomenon of public islam within urban da'wah practices in Bandung

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Abstract

Purpose - This study aims to explain how the phenomenon of public Islam is manifested within urban da'wah practices by examining the dynamics of da'wah spaces, the transformation of religious authority, and the emerging orientation toward public welfare in urban life

Method - Using a phenomenological approach, this study examines the lived experiences of informants involved in urban da'wah, both as preachers and as audiences

Result - Urban da'wah is increasingly moving beyond traditional places of worship into more fluid public spaces. This spatial expansion goes hand in hand with the strengthening of democratized religious authority, where legitimacy is shaped by the relevance of the message and its resonance with the lived experiences of urban communities. The findings also indicate a strong orientation toward public welfare, reflected in social initiatives, the avoidance of sensitive themes, and efforts to maintain social harmony within the city's diverse environment.

Implication - These findings imply the need to redefine da'wah concepts to become more responsive to urban social ecologies and adaptive to contemporary modes of public communication.

Originality/Value - Its originality lies in combining phenomenology with the public Islam framework to conceptualize urban da'wah as a multisited, dialogical, and welfare-oriented practice, offering fresh insights for developing contemporary da'wah theory.



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Kata kunci:

Islam Publik, dakwah, urban.

Abstrak

Tujuan – Penelitian ini bertujuan menjelaskan bagaimana fenomena Islam publik termanifestasi dalam praktik dakwah urban dengan menelaah dinamika ruang dakwah, transformasi otoritas keagamaan, dan munculnya orientasi kemaslahatan dalam kehidupan masyarakat kota.

Metode – Dengan menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologis, penelitian ini mengkaji pengalaman hidup para informan yang terlibat dalam dakwah urban, baik sebagai pendakwah maupun sebagai audiens.

Hasil – Dakwah urban semakin bergerak melampaui tempat ibadah tradisional menuju ruang-ruang publik yang lebih cair. Perluasan ruang ini berjalan seiring menguatnya otoritas keagamaan yang semakin demokratis, di mana legitimasi dibentuk oleh relevansi pesan dan kedekatannya dengan pengalaman hidup masyarakat urban. Temuan penelitian juga memperlihatkan orientasi yang kuat terhadap kemaslahatan publik, tercermin dalam berbagai inisiatif sosial, penghindaran tema-tema sensitif, serta upaya menjaga harmoni sosial di tengah keberagaman kota.

Implikasi – Temuan ini menunjukkan perlunya redefinisi konsep dakwah agar lebih responsif terhadap ekologi sosial perkotaan dan lebih adaptif terhadap pola komunikasi publik kontemporer.

Orisinalitas/Nilai – Keaslian penelitian ini terletak pada integrasi pendekatan fenomenologi dengan kerangka Islam publik untuk mengonseptualisasikan dakwah urban sebagai praktik multisitus, dialogis, dan berorientasi kemaslahatan, sehingga menawarkan perspektif baru dalam pengembangan teori dakwah masa kini.

Introduction

The development of da'wah in major cities marks a new chapter in the history of Islamic value dissemination. Urbanization, digital disruption, and shifting lifestyles have generated forms of da'wah that are more communicative and contextual (Rustandi & Aliyudin, 2025). Bandung, as both a religious and creative city, illustrates a dynamic form of da'wah that integrates spirituality, popular culture, and public participation. This phenomenon signifies the emergence of public Islam a mode of religiosity that is not fully bound to the authority of a particular madhhab, but instead adopts a contextual approach that blends the principles of sharia with modern social demands.

This development is not limited to Bandung; da'wah in many large cities now enters a phase marked by transformations in character and orientation. For example, Cipta and Zakirman (2024) highlight the rise of participatory da'wah involving diverse social groups, especially in the expansion of economic da'wah initiatives. Intensifying urbanization has led people to live within the fast-paced, competitive rhythms of city life (Prakash, Jyoti et al., 2023). In such conditions, the need for spiritual spaces does not diminish; rather, it grows in more fluid and open forms (Hasyim et al., 2023). Da'wah, consequently, evolves to follow these dynamics, shifting from an instructive model to one that is more dialogical and relevant to urban realities.

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Amid these changes, the digital era has become a key factor shaping the new face of da'wah (Irawan et al., 2023). Online platforms, social media spaces, and visual content ecosystems allow religious messages to reach younger generations through communication styles that feel closer to their daily experiences. Ulyan (2023) refers to this phenomenon as the democratization of religious discourse, making it more inclusive. Da'wah no longer functions merely as a ritual act of transmitting religious teachings, but as an interactive space where audiences can respond to, evaluate, and even contribute to the evolving Islamic narrative (Karim et al, 2025).

Bandung exemplifies how urban da'wah adopts distinctive characteristics. The city brings together a religious identity and a creative spirit that has long shaped its social atmosphere (Qurani, 2023). Religious activities grow alongside art festivals, creative communities, and popular culture, resulting in da'wah practices that feel more attuned to the lifestyles of urban residents (Rahman & Mufti, 2021). Da'wah spaces appear not only in mosques but also in cafés, creative studios, public parks, and digital channels. Innovations even extend to particular groups, including motorcycle gangs and marginalized communities. Syam and Nizar (2021) illustrate this through the example of a prominent preacher: "Hanan Attaki successfully embraces the motorcycle gang community in Bandung by conveying messages in a contemporary style and involving young people in social media activities."

Within this context, spirituality expands in meaning. It is no longer limited to formal worship but is intertwined with the search for identity, emotional well-being, and efforts to cultivate harmonious relations with others. The presence of popular culture in da'wah is not viewed as a threat but as a medium capable of bridging Islamic values with the lived experiences of urban generations. Public participation becomes essential in this process, as society is no longer a passive object of da'wah but actively shapes the religious ecosystem of the city.

These developments reflect the emergence of a more flexible and responsive form of public Islam. Religious life is no longer governed solely by the authority of a particular madhhab or institution but grows out of complex and ever-changing social interactions. A contextual approach becomes crucial, enabling Islamic principles to be creatively interpreted in addressing modern social challenges. Thus, what occurs in major cities is not merely a shift in the methods of da'wah, but a transformation in how people understand and embody Islam within the constantly moving dynamics of urban life.

The phenomenon of public Islam can be observed in various urban da'wah practices. For example, Tablighi da'wah sessions in Bandung's urban mosques emphasize practical ethics rather than deep legal discussions. Urban study groups also consist of diverse participants with different fiqh backgrounds, yet they gather within the same da'wah activities. Saputra (2022) describes this transformation as a hybrid identity among urban Muslims, where Islamic values are contextualized within modern social demands and popular culture, emphasizing dialogue, participation, and openness to differences. Furthermore, da'wah in public spaces and social media encourages the creation of egalitarian dialogical arenas where different groups can discuss and express religious views without dominance from a single authority. Hanum and Baidawi (2024) interpret this shift as a movement away from single-madhhab authority toward a more fluid, adaptive, and responsive religious life in urban settings.

Although urban da'wah has been widely studied, discussions of public Islam within urban da'wah practices remain limited. Relevant studies include: first, Arrahmah and Alifiyori (2024), who explain that participants of urban mosque study circles are mostly migrants who prefer rational themes aligned with urban characteristics. Second, Hanum and Zulhazmi (2022), who examine the strategies of urban Muslim women's da'wah and find that da'wah has expanded beyond lectures into participatory social engagement, demonstrating its orientation toward collective welfare. Third, Ardiansyah and Aniq (2025), who show how Salafi da'wah effectively uses digital media to reach dynamic and flexible urban audiences.

This article attempts to portray urban da'wah in Bandung, West Java, using the concept of Public Islam developed by Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (2004). The study aims to: (1) analyze social communication spaces in da'wah activities; (2) describe forms of democratized da'wah authority; and (3) illustrate the orientation toward social welfare in Bandung's urban da'wah practices.

This study contributes to expanding the understanding of da'wah by demonstrating that it is no longer confined to sacred spaces but is part of the dynamic public Islam that thrives in open social environments. It also offers empirical insight into the democratization of religious authority, showing that legitimacy is now shaped by relevance, proximity, and audience experience rather than traditional symbols or madhhab affiliation. Finally, the study introduces the framework of welfare orientation as a central axis of urban da'wah.

Research Methods

This study is a qualitative research employing a phenomenological method (Køster & Fernandez, 2023). This approach is intended to capture the understanding and lived experiences of urban da'wah practitioners within the phenomenon of public Islam (Englander & Morley, 2023).

To collect the data, the study used in-depth interviews with preachers and members of *majelis taklim* in the city of Bandung (Sousa, 2014).

Results and Discussion

Public Islam Concept

The concept of Public Islam developed by Salvatore and Eickelman (2004) is grounded in the understanding that Muslim public spheres are neither singular nor homogeneous, but rather social arenas that are continuously negotiated. They emphasize that “Muslim public arenas are not stable, coherent wholes,” positioning the public sphere as a dynamic landscape that enables the emergence of diverse religious expressions. Within this framework, Islam is not situated at the margins of social life; instead, it actively shapes public discourse.

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Public Islam is further explained through the openness of social spaces to the articulation of religious values. Salvatore and Eickelman describe the public sphere as an arena in which various actors engage in symbolic representation. They argue that social actors “express themselves in a whole network of representations,” indicating that Islam in the public sphere is no longer dominated by a single authority, but rather becomes a field of dialogue and negotiation among multiple actors.

Göle (2002) offers commentary on the reinterpretation of the public sphere and religious expression. She points out that Islam has become increasingly visible in public life, challenging previous boundaries and secular assumptions about public spaces. This shift demonstrates a movement from macro-level politics to micro level practices, where religious values are expressed through everyday actions, social interactions, and lived experiences. Thus, the change not only signifies the more open presence of religion but also reveals how Islam operates through the concrete realities of daily life.

In the context of modernity, Public Islam functions as a mechanism for reinterpreting tradition. Transformations within modern Muslim societies create a need to reread religious teachings within a framework of rational communication. This is reflected in the assertion that Muslim publics are shaped by “diverse and sometimes competing claims” to interpret Islamic values in social life (Salvatore & Eickelman, 2004; Riyadi, Karim, 2023).

The Muslim public sphere is also portrayed as a site for articulating moral expression. This aspect is highlighted in the claim that individuals and groups seek to “articulate their moral claims and the ways in which they have formulated them.” Therefore, Public Islam is not merely a religious discourse; it is an ethical process that contributes to shaping collective consciousness.

Emphasis on *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), contextualization, and ethical renewal becomes essential for keeping Islamic teachings relevant to contemporary issues such as democracy, human rights, and globalization. Thinkers like Muhammad Abed al-Jabiri underscore the importance of rational (*burhani*) approaches to interpreting tradition, allowing for social and intellectual transformation without sacrificing core Islamic values. Thus, in the modern era, Public Islam serves as an open space for articulating, debating, and reinterpreting religious traditions within dynamic social life (Qosim & Amin, 2025).

One of the significant contributions of Salvatore and Eickelman's (2004) work is their conceptualization of the public sphere as an arena of symbolic exchange. They highlight that religious expressions in the public arena are part of "networks of meaning" that are continually produced and reproduced through social interaction. This demonstrates that Public Islam is not merely a theoretical construct but a practical phenomenon manifested through cultural representations in Muslim societies.

The development of Public Islam is also inseparable from the shifting dynamics of religious authority. This concept explains that the role of traditional religious elites is changing as new actors participate in the public sphere, producing a more fluid, plural, and open configuration of religious authority. This is particularly relevant in Muslim public arenas, which function as spaces for "contested claims in society."

Social transformation and media have played crucial roles in expanding the public sphere. Salvatore and Eickelman stress that religious representations are now produced not only by formal institutions but also by diverse actors with access to modern media. The spread of ideas through media extends the reach of Islamic discourse, allowing broader public participation.

The rise of social media further expands the reach of Islamic discourse, enabling broader participation and fostering inclusive, populist, or even contesting narratives (Hamzah et al., 2025). However, social media can also heighten polarization, spread misinformation, and create challenges such as radicalism and negative stereotyping of Islam (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016). Overall, social media acts as a significant catalyst in transforming the Islamic public sphere, enriching religious discourse while simultaneously presenting new social challenges.

Sociologically, Public Islam can be understood as a product of increasing literacy and social mobility. A more educated and informationally aware society tends to produce and consume religious discourse more reflectively. This phenomenon is presented in the literature as part of modern Muslim transformations that generate more diffuse and diversified religious expressions.

The concept of the *common good* serves as a normative foundation for Public Islam. Salvatore and Eickelman (2004) assert that the common good in Public Islam is not monopolized by formal authorities; instead, it emerges from collective participation in formulating moral values and directions within the public sphere. Public Islam thus becomes a social process centered on deliberation, participation, and collective meaning-making, where both scholars and ordinary believers actively shape Islamic public discourse (Ikeda, 2005).

The principle of the common good is also reflected in Islamic values such as justice, consultation (*shura*), and welfare (*maslahah*), which underpin public service and community governance. This process is dynamic and adaptive, enabling Islamic values to remain relevant and responsive to social changes and the needs of plural societies (Elmahjub, 2019). Public Islam therefore serves as a dialogical space where values are negotiated and where efforts toward a more just and inclusive social order are pursued.

From this perspective, the Muslim public sphere is not only a discursive arena but also a practical one that shapes collective action. The formulation of the common good is participatory, open, and continuously renewed through social dynamics. This principle illustrates how Public Islam provides an ethical space that allows Muslim societies to engage with modern challenges. Through this lens,

social transformation can be analyzed dynamically, demonstrating that Islamic values may serve as a source of inspiration for inclusive and adaptive social change (Nurizun, 2020). Public Islam also creates opportunities for dialogue between tradition and modernity and fosters broader participation in shaping a social order centered on justice and the common good (Rokibullah, 2025).

Methodologically, the Public Islam approach offers a way to understand how Islamic values operate in modern societies without being trapped in the polarization between traditionalism and secularism. It provides an analytical framework to explain how religion continues to evolve in dialogue with changing social realities.

In practice, Public Islam manifests in various forms such as religious social movements, public discussions, cultural production, and community practices. These expressions demonstrate how Islam interacts with social structures, political systems, and technological developments. The concept also illustrates how Muslims construct their identities within pluralistic settings (Dunne et al., 2020). By operating within the public sphere, Islamic identity is shaped not only by tradition but also by lived experiences within diverse social environments.

The entirety of Salvatore and Eickelman's (2004) ideas affirms that Public Islam is a social phenomenon that opens space for interpretive creativity, public participation, and the pursuit of the common good. It is not merely a normative discourse but a social field that grows and changes alongside transformations within global Muslim societies. Public Islam views religion as an integral component of social communication and public morality. Its three core principles are social communication spaces, democratization of authority, and welfare orientation.

Urban Da'wah Concept

Da'wah refers to the activity of inviting others to follow God's teachings, promoting goodness (*amar ma'ruf*), and preventing wrongdoing (*nahi munkar*), as instructed in the Qur'an and Hadith (Hadi & Suharyat, 2022). The term *urban* generally refers to areas characterized by high population density, developed infrastructure, and complex economic, social, and cultural activity (Veckalne & Tambovceva, 2023). Da'wah in urban communities can thus be understood as the process of conveying, guiding, and contextualizing Islamic teachings in alignment with the characteristics of city life—fast-paced, diverse, competitive, and often marked by social or psychological pressures.

Urban da'wah grows out of the recognition that city life carries unceasing rhythms, competitive pressures, and relational fragmentation—all of which shape how individuals understand religion. In such circumstances, da'wah emerges not merely as the transmission of moral messages but as an effort to reinterpret the evolving spiritual needs of urban communities. Studies show that urban spaces generate new religious needs distinct from those of traditional societies, making it impossible to rely on old da'wah models (Hasanah, 2019).

Changing social structures in cities form a crucial foundation for urban da'wah. High mobility, loosened social ties, and diverse backgrounds demand more flexible religious messaging. The perspectives of urbanization and modernity indicate that urban culture—from technology to entertainment industries shapes how individuals negotiate spiritual values. Within this landscape, da'wah must not only offer guidance but also recognize the psychological dynamics of urban residents who often navigate uncertainty (Rustandi & Aliyudin, 2025).

Public Islam adds a new dimension to urban da'wah. Religion is no longer confined to private or ritual matters but becomes an active social discourse in public spaces. In this sense, da'wah becomes a communicative process that negotiates values and bridges Islamic teachings with the struggles of urban life. This approach is reinforced in studies on the transformation of religious public spaces in urban areas (Nurhaidah, Lubis & Hidayatullah, 2025).

Urban heterogeneity encourages more participatory and empathetic da'wah methods. Communication perspectives emphasize that urban residents tend to resist overly instructive approaches. They respond more positively to dialogical da'wah that connects with daily experiences such as work, social relations, and the pursuit of personal meaning. Several studies demonstrate that messages grounded in everyday life are more readily accepted in urban settings (Hidayah, Atabik & Karim, 2025).

Urban identities particularly among youth and working-class communities also shape the character of urban da'wah. Creative communities, hobby groups, and interest-based networks show that urban residents construct their spirituality through informal and nontraditional spaces. Studies of Muslim youth communities in various cities reveal the emergence of hybrid religious identities that blend tradition with urban lifestyles (Rosidi, 2022).

Urban religious spaces serve not only as sites of worship but as sanctuaries for people overwhelmed by urban routines. Urban mosques often function as psychological oases offering tranquility and social connection. Research on urban *majelis taklim* shows that these spaces transform into hubs for spiritual recovery, open discussions, and the search for meaning (Hasanah, 2019; Misbah, 2013).

From the perspective of urban anthropology, da'wah is understood as a cultural practice embedded in everyday life. It does not stand apart from daily experience but is woven into activities such as commuting, working, leisure, and cultural consumption. Da'wah becomes relevant when it articulates meaning in everyday practices without rigidly separating the sacred and the profane (Nazar, 2022).

Urban residents also live amid risks and uncertainties. Economic pressures, career demands, and social competition create environments that require emotional support. In such conditions, urban da'wah functions as a space for emotional healing and psychological reinforcement. Some studies affirm that da'wah emphasizing moral and emotional support is more effective than normative approaches among urban communities (Zulfikar, 2022).

The development of digital media has reshaped urban da'wah. Religious spaces now migrate onto phone screens and social media algorithms. Da'wah authority becomes more fluid as new figures emerge with distinct linguistic styles, aesthetics, and emotional resonance suited to urban audiences. Studies on youth *hijrah* communities and digital da'wah highlight new patterns in the dissemination of religious values across virtual spaces (Rustandi & Aliyudin, 2025; Adeni, Hakim & Hasanah, 2023).

Ultimately, urban da'wah is a process of nurturing spirituality amid the bustle of city life. It moves adaptively reading anxieties, offering meaning, and creating more humane spaces of encounter. Contemporary studies demonstrate that urban da'wah is not merely a method of

transmitting religious messages but an effort to rediscover humanity within the ever-changing urban habitat (Zulhazmi, 2024).

Social Communication Spaces in Urban Da'wah

The constant movement of urban life gives rise to increasingly fluid, flexible, and porous forms of religiosity. Within a city rhythm that never truly pauses, da'wah discovers new spaces to breathe and interact with the public. No longer confined to mosque pulpits or formal religious forums, da'wah now flows along the everyday routes of urban residents into workplaces, across university campuses, through cafés, and even into entertainment venues and shopping centers. In this context, the idea of Public Islam becomes an essential lens for understanding how religious messages circulate within increasingly open social spaces.

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The account of a preacher, Biri Rachman (2025), illustrates how da'wah moves across the layered landscape of the city. As he explains: "I deliver da'wah in several different places, starting from residential mosques, university campuses, and office mosques. But I am also active in public spaces such as cafés that provide Islamic discussion forums, city entertainment venues for casual study sessions, and occasionally participate in da'wah programs held in unusual places, like malls."

Biri Rachman experience reveals how public da'wah spaces have undergone a significant transformation in urban society. As he moves from residential mosques to campuses and then to office mosques, he demonstrates a shift from institutional sacred spaces toward more open public arenas. From the perspective of public da'wah spaces, this shift marks the movement from formal worship spaces into everyday social arenas where various groups interact, allowing da'wah to appear not only as ritual but as part of daily social conversation. (Muhtar, 2021; Inun, Sari, & Zuhriyah, 2025)

Biri Rachman involvement in cafés offering Islamic discussion forums illustrates the expansion of public da'wah spaces into areas traditionally considered non-religious. In public sphere theory, cafés function as venues for egalitarian discussion. When BR brings da'wah into such settings, he relocates religious messages to spaces that dissolve hierarchical distance between preacher and audience. These spaces allow da'wah to appear as conversation rather than instruction, aligning with the principles of Public Islam that emphasize dialogical communication in open social contexts.

When da'wah takes place in urban entertainment venues, Biri Rachman blurs the boundary between the profane and the religious. Public recreational spaces such as parks or city leisure areas are typically perceived as detached from religious discourse. Yet BR's experience shows that these spaces can accommodate da'wah when the approach adapts to the atmosphere, rhythm, and characteristics of urban audiences. From the perspective of Islamic public space, such efforts expand the visibility of Islam not to dominate, but to demonstrate that religious values can coexist within diverse social environments (Sari, Asyla, & Yasin, 2025).

Da'wah conducted in malls what Biri Rachman refers to as "unusual locations" represents the most explicit form of da'wah intervention in modern public spaces. Malls symbolize consumption, capitalism, and urban lifestyle. When da'wah enters such spaces, it reframes a setting previously saturated with advertising and consumer culture into a site for ethical reflection. Public da'wah theory views such initiatives as efforts to introduce moral dimensions into spaces previously sterile

of spiritual values, transforming urban public spaces into arenas not only of consumption but also of moral consciousness (Retnosary, Salleh, & Masruroh, 2021).

JID | 26 Biri Rachman activities across various public venues indicate that urban da'wah no longer relies on static spaces. Public da'wah becomes multisited, integrating mosques, cafés, campuses, parks, and malls into a complementary da'wah landscape. From a public sphere perspective, the diversity of these locations signals that da'wah has entered the social circulation of the city, moving along with the mobility of urban residents who are not tied to a single place.

This phenomenon also produces new forms of public participation in da'wah. When da'wah takes place in cafés or entertainment venues, the public does not merely act as passive listeners but becomes part of the conversation—even co-producers of meaning. They bring their own experiences and perspectives into the discussion, creating collective meaning. This aligns with the principles of Islamic public space that emphasize social participation and collaborative meaning-making.

Ultimately, from the perspective of public da'wah spaces, BR's experience illustrates da'wah as a process unfolding within the social spaces where urban residents live their daily lives. Da'wah no longer merely invites people to come to the mosque; instead, it visits them in the spaces where they already gather. In this way, public da'wah becomes a living, open, and flexible arena relevant to the ongoing dynamics of urban life.

The testimony of Silah (2025) provides further insight into how urban residents engage with da'wah through flexible and layered patterns. She explains: "I usually attend da'wah at the Trans Studio Mosque or near where I live, and sometimes join study sessions on campus or in cafés. Besides that, I often watch lectures on YouTube and Instagram."

Her account enriches the understanding of how public da'wah spaces operate in urban society, while also revealing their parallel with BR's experience. If BR represents the preacher who actively moves between spaces, Silah represents the urban audience who consumes da'wah through equally fluid, multisited, and flexible patterns. From the perspective of public da'wah spaces, this demonstrates that urban da'wah is shaped not only by the movement of preachers but also by the audience who stitches multiple spaces into a unified religious experience (Ridho et al., 2023).

Silah's participation at the Trans Studio Mosque, a mosque located within an entertainment complex confirms Biri Rachman earlier depiction of da'wah entering profane spaces. A mosque inside a mall is not merely a place of worship, but a hybrid public space that brings together mobility, consumption, and religious practice. Her experience shows that urban da'wah now takes place at the intersection of private and commercial spaces. This illustrates how public da'wah is no longer limited by the formal function of space, but by its ability to provide accessibility, comfort, and relevance for urban society.

Her involvement in campus and café study circles strengthens the picture of da'wah expanding into more egalitarian social environments. As seen in BR's account, cafés function as discussion spaces that promote horizontal interaction between preachers and audiences. Silah's presence in such settings suggests that urban residents view these spaces as more intimate and aligned with the rhythm of city life. Here, public da'wah does not operate through formality but through an atmosphere that encourages conversation and the exchange of experiences.

A new dimension emerges when Silah describes her habit of watching lectures on YouTube and Instagram. This expands public da'wah from physical spaces into digital ones. From the perspective of public da'wah spaces, social media creates a "third space" that transcends geographical and temporal boundaries. This space extends the reach of da'wah and gives audiences freedom to choose, filter, and curate their religious experiences. Digital space allows da'wah to appear in more personal, situational forms—marking a point of convergence with BR, who brings da'wah to multiple physical spaces, while Silah accesses it across multiple digital ones.

Her involvement in digital spaces highlights the rise of more democratic forms of public participation. The abundance of audio-visual da'wah on social media shifts authority away from traditional structures toward more fluid forms. Audiences like Silah actively choose whom they listen to, when, and in what context. This confirms that public da'wah spaces are produced not only through the preacher's presence but also through the audience's curation and preference.

From a public da'wah perspective, Silah's experience shows that urban residents are no longer confined to a single type of da'wah space. They combine physical and digital spaces into a borderless spiritual landscape. If Biri Rachman represents the preacher stepping out of the mosque to enter the city, Silah represents the audience weaving those spaces into a personal da'wah journey. This reflects a symbiosis between preacher mobility and audience mobility together creating a public da'wah sphere that is no longer vertical but circulatory and networked.

The relationship between BR and Silah demonstrates that public da'wah space is a social field constructed through encounters between da'wah actors and mobile urban audiences. The resulting da'wah space is not a single fixed point but a layered network of mosques, cafés, campuses, malls, and digital platforms. In this way, public da'wah mirrors urban life itself dynamic, multilayered, fluid, and constantly adjusting to the rhythms of the city.

Biri Rachman provides additional explanation regarding which locations most frequently host da'wah activities: "Some are permanent, such as residential mosques that have regular schedules. But many others shift from place to place. Usually it depends on the needs of the audience. For example, young people prefer hangout spots, so we move to cafés or co-working spaces. Some study sessions are even held on apartment rooftops or in recreational areas. So the space is very flexible and adaptive."

This description broadens the understanding that public da'wah spaces expand not only geographically but also socially, adapting to the dynamics of the audience. When BR explains that some da'wah spaces are fixed while others shift according to audience needs, he confirms that urban da'wah operates along two simultaneous axes: structured spaces and fluid spaces. In public da'wah theory, these dual axes create a balance between stability and innovation, allowing da'wah to reach audiences with diverse life rhythms.

Biri Rachman emphasis on spatial flexibility highlights social adaptation as the foundation of urban da'wah. When spaces are chosen based on audience preferences such as young people who prefer casual hangout spots it shows that da'wah utilizes receptive spaces, which naturally facilitate message acceptance. From the perspective of public da'wah spaces, this indicates that religious spaces are no longer defined by physical structures but by the intensity of interaction and the openness of the space to become a site of moral conversation.

The use of cafés or co-working spaces demonstrates how da'wah enters youth productivity and creative environments. These spaces belong to the social ecology of urban communities, often associated with flexible work, collaboration, and digital lifestyles. By bringing da'wah into such spaces, preachers like BR create embeddedness the embedding of da'wah into the everyday flow of urban life. This reinforces the idea that public da'wah spaces are relational and shaped by social needs rather than top-down decisions (Aqila & Kurniawan, 2024).

Holding study sessions on apartment rooftops shows the use of vertical space for da'wah a uniquely urban phenomenon. Rooftops offer a blend of privacy and openness, informality and intimacy. From the public da'wah perspective, rooftops form semi-public spaces that combine private ambience with social function, allowing da'wah to occur without the normative pressure of formal religious settings.

Choosing recreational spaces as da'wah venues reflects an understanding of urban life rhythms, in which people seek balance between seriousness and leisure. Here, da'wah becomes a gentle interruption entering recreational settings not to replace them but to infuse moral reflection into lighter atmospheres. This aligns with public da'wah theory, which sees the city as a space that can host diverse messages as long as they do not disrupt the character of the space.

The spatial flexibility described by BR shows that urban da'wah operates through the principle of situatedness sensitivity to location, atmosphere, and the emotional disposition of the audience (Nazili et al., 2024). Public da'wah spaces thus become mediums that shape how audiences interpret religious messages. As spaces shift, the mood of da'wah changes, and so does the meaning produced. Space becomes part of the da'wah text itself.

Ultimately, BR's account illustrates that public da'wah in the urban era follows the logic of adaptation rather than the logic of fixed places. Spaces are chosen, shaped, and interpreted according to the social context of the audience, enabling da'wah to exist across various forms of space formal, semi-formal, recreational, private-communal, and creative. This demonstrates that public da'wah spaces are not merely locations for message delivery but social landscapes in which da'wah negotiates with lifestyle, preferences, and the rhythms of the city. Public da'wah thus proves to be dynamic and continually evolving in response to the spiritual needs of an increasingly diverse urban society.

Democratizing Authority: Beyond the Boundaries of Madhhab

Within the shifting landscape of urban da'wah, the ways in which people assess religious authority have moved beyond traditional symbolic markers. Younger generations in the city inhabit social spaces that are more fluid and open, reshaping their relationship with preachers. Authority is no longer anchored in physical attributes such as turbans, caps, or sarongs, but in the preacher's ability to communicate effectively and remain relevant. An interview with Adli Salsabila illustrates how contemporary religious authority emerges from emotional closeness, contextual delivery, and the preacher's capacity to bridge Islamic values with the rhythms of urban life.

In her narrative, Adli Salsabila (2025), a participant in study circles in Bandung, emphasizes that appearance is no longer a primary marker of da'wah legitimacy. Preachers who present themselves in a modern style are often perceived as more approachable and better able to articulate the lived experiences of young people. This shift reflects a profound transformation in how urban

audiences interpret religious authority: authority is no longer inherited through symbols, but shaped through authentic encounters between the preacher and the audience. She further explains, “There is no problem with ustaz who do not wear traditional attributes like caps, sarongs, or turbans. What matters most is the content of the da'wah, not the appearance. A more modern look can make an ustaz seem more approachable and relatable for young people, making the message easier to accept.”

Her experience offers a strong illustration of the transformation of religious authority in the context of urban da'wah. When she asserts that appearance is no longer the determining factor, it becomes clear that contemporary religious legitimacy is measured more by the quality of the message than by symbolic attributes. From a phenomenological viewpoint, this attitude reflects a shift in meaning experienced directly by urban individuals: authority is no longer understood as something attached to traditional symbols, but as the communicative capacity of the preacher to reach the audience's lived world.

Adli's account also shows that urban generations read religious authority through emotional connection and social relevance. When she notes that modern appearances make preachers more “relatable,” she expresses a personal sense of connection with figures who reflect her everyday reality. Phenomenologically, religious authority becomes a felt authority—experienced rather than imposed through doctrinal symbols. Alkhawaldeh (2022) highlights the importance of communicative ability in generating emotional closeness and reducing hierarchical distance. Authority emerges when preachers step into the horizon of the audience's experience, not when they emphasize symbolic superiority.

Her narrative also reveals a broader shift from textual authority to communicative authority. When she emphasizes the importance of “content,” it shows that urban audiences judge preachers by their clarity, contextual relevance, and grounded delivery. This shift reduces the dominance of ritualistic appearance as a determinant of legitimacy. In a phenomenological framework, such changes arise from encounters with diverse preachers across fluid public spaces both physical and digital each displaying different styles and approaches.

Adli's remarks further indicate that urban communities increasingly embrace new aesthetic forms of religiosity. A preacher without traditional attire is not viewed as deviant but as a natural expression of contemporary religious life. Phenomenologically, this reflects the erosion of symbolic boundaries between “traditional” and “modern.” In urban da'wah, religious symbols do not disappear but shift into supporting roles, no longer overshadowing the message itself.

When framed within the concept of democratizing authority in Public Islam, her experience shows that religious authority is now open to a wider range of figures. This openness arises as audiences feel entitled to evaluate, choose, and determine which preachers they deem worthy of following. Adli's experience represents a new form of empowerment in which the public is no longer a passive recipient of authority but an active participant in constructing it. Authority becomes a negotiated product between preacher and public, not something accepted uncritically from traditional structures.

Phenomenologically, Adli's account illustrates that religious experience in urban settings is no longer dependent on the representation of specific madhhab identities. She does not mention any expectation that a preacher must visually represent a particular school of jurisprudence. This indicates that madhhab boundaries in urban da'wah are becoming increasingly fluid. For Adli, meaningful religious engagement does not stem from madhhab symbols, but from messages that address the anxieties and aspirations of urban life. Thus, democratizing authority extends beyond symbols and beyond the confines of madhhab identity itself.

Adli's experience demonstrates that urban da'wah is moving toward a more dialogical and humanistic form of authority. Authority is no longer displayed but embodied through encounters that resonate with the audience's lived reality. In the context of Public Islam, this signifies a shift from structural to relational authority, from symbol to substance, and from madhhab identity to the moral value of the message. Democratizing authority, as experienced by Adli, reveals that urban da'wah has become a space where religious meanings are openly, inclusively, and cross-symbolically negotiated.

A similar pattern appears in the narrative of Dinda Paradisa, which shows how urban residents engage with religious authority with increasing openness and reflexivity. When she states that she is not fanatical about any single fiqh interpretation or preacher, her perspective highlights a shift in how authority is lived and understood in everyday urban life: "I'm not fanatical about one ustaz's fiqh interpretation. As long as what they say is good, I can accept it. When it comes to madhhab, everyone can follow their own; we live in a heterogeneous society."

From a phenomenological perspective, this attitude arises not from normative doctrine but from lived experience in diverse environments where religious authority must be relevant and beneficial. Dinda relates to religion through a process of selection, adjustment, and personal evaluation, making religious authority more fluid.

Her stance shows that urban audiences judge preachers based on the substance and flexibility of their message, not on their madhhab affiliation. The statement "as long as the message is good, I can accept it" reflects a democratic approach to authority: audiences claim the right to sift and choose. Phenomenologically, this signals a subjective experience of spiritual freedom, in which individuals feel unbound by traditional authority structures and guided instead by values that prove meaningful in daily life. Here, authority shifts from hierarchy to dialogue.

Her acknowledgment of social heterogeneity is crucial to understanding how she situates herself within urban da'wah. Urban life—with its diversity of workplaces, neighborhoods, and social environments—accustoms people to encountering various religious perspectives. Phenomenologically, this plural social space shapes an experience of religion rooted in encounters, making it natural for Dinda to reject the imposition of a single madhhab as the only reference. She experiences religion as a constellation of values rather than rigid doctrinal boundaries.

Her attitude demonstrates a symbolic de-escalation of religious authority. Differences in fiqh are not grounds for rejecting or distrusting a preacher. For Dinda, authority is not tied to the possession of a particular doctrinal identity but to the capacity to offer constructive moral orientation. Phenomenologically, authority is experienced as something that resonates internally rather than something externally imposed. This reflects a more personal and participatory form of authority.

From the perspective of urban da'wah, Dinda's experience confirms that the communication space is now filled with diverse figures using varied approaches. Audiences like Dinda no longer passively accept a single authority but instead develop internal authority the ability to weigh, sense, and select their own religious guidance. Phenomenologically, authority is produced through lived encounters rather than transmitted through institutional or madhhab lineage. This reveals how Public Islam in the city operates as a flexible arena of value exchange.

Dinda's acceptance of madhhab diversity shows that democratizing authority accompanies a growing awareness of social coexistence. Life in dense, heterogeneous urban environments fosters sensitivity to difference, making rigid forms of authority incompatible with everyday religious experience. Phenomenologically, this reflects what Umam and Hakim (2023) describe as embodied tolerance a form of tolerance rooted in lived experience rather than abstract discourse. JID | 31

Her experience closely aligns with earlier findings from Adli Salsabila. Together, they reveal emerging patterns in how urban communities interpret religious authority. If Adli highlights the shift away from traditional symbolic markers in evaluating preachers, Dinda illustrates the broader consequences of this shift: the public no longer feels bound to a single madhhab or fiqh authority. Both move within the same current the democratization of authority reshaping the contours of Public Islam in urban settings.

Thus, Adli's account opens the discussion on the transformation of symbolic authority, while Dinda's deepens it by showing how these symbolic shifts influence personal religious choices. Adli views authority through the fluidity of the preacher's presentation, while Dinda experiences it through substantive freedom the ability to embrace diverse fiqh perspectives without fanatical attachment. Together, their perspectives reveal a complementary dynamic: as authority becomes less tied to traditional symbols, the public gains greater freedom to assess religious content without madhhab pressure. Collectively, they portray urban da'wah as a more open, egalitarian space rooted in the lived experiences of a heterogeneous society.

Orientation Toward Public Benefit (Maslahah)

The experience of Adli Salsabila (2025) illustrates how the orientation toward *maslahah* has become the most crucial framework for understanding da'wah amid the diversity of urban society. When she emphasizes the need for Muslims to unite more solidly in responding to social challenges, it is evident that *maslahah* is not understood as an abstract concept but as a lived necessity. From a phenomenological perspective, her statement emerges from direct encounters with diversity, social friction, and potential conflicts common in urban spaces. For Adli, *maslahah* reflects the effort to safeguard social harmony within the unavoidable intensity of inter-identity encounters.

Her view on the importance of avoiding sensitive topics in da'wah shows how she perceives the da'wah space as potentially fragile and prone to tension. Urban communities inhabit dynamic public arenas where various groups and interests intersect. Under such conditions, divisive da'wah material may destabilize an already delicate social fabric. Phenomenologically, this experience produces a moral awareness that da'wah must function as a medium that calms rather than provokes conflict.

In this sense, *maslahah* emerges as a value shaped by the need to maintain social cohesion. Adli's belief that Muslims should stay united reflects a collective experience shared by many urban residents: internal fragmentation weakens overall social resilience. Through a phenomenological lens, this collective sensibility grounds her appreciation of da'wah that brings comfort, reassurance, and unity. Such awareness grows not from normative pressure but from lived encounters with a more plural and complex religious reality. For her, *maslahah* means creating safe spaces of encounter for everyone.

Adli's attitude toward avoiding sensitive themes in da'wah signals the rise of a new ethical orientation in urban da'wah one that considers the social impact of each message. From a phenomenological perspective, this action expresses a form of moral intentionality, an awareness that da'wah content affects not only individuals but also the broader social dynamics. Da'wah oriented toward *maslahah* is one that avoids polarization, preserves fraternity, and restores connections among community members.

Her experience also reflects how urban residents have become increasingly aware of the potential conflict arising from differences in religious interpretation and identity. This sensitivity emerges because urban life brings diverse groups into frequent contact in workplaces, public transportation, social media, and physical public spaces. In such environments, insensitive da'wah may harden boundaries and create tension. Phenomenologically, Adli feels that *maslahah* requires da'wah to be more inclusive and accepting of diversity as part of urban life.

Furthermore, Adli's reflections show that urban da'wah is no longer centered on affirming group identity but on social solutions that involve the broader community. She underscores the importance of addressing shared problems from internal Muslim conflicts to interreligious relations—based on her own observations and lived experiences. Within this reality, da'wah becomes a bridge-building effort rather than a tool for segregation. *Maslahah* thus serves as a principle connecting spiritual values with practical needs in the city.

Her experience demonstrates that *maslahah* in urban da'wah arises from encounters with the complexity of urban public space. *Maslahah* is not merely a moral teaching but a response to social realities that demand caution, maturity, and collective awareness. Within the framework of Public Islam, her experience shows that effective da'wah today is da'wah that sustains diversity, nurtures social relationships, and prioritizes peace. Da'wah becomes a social practice that not only conveys values but also helps build a stable living environment for urban communities.

Meanwhile, the experience of Biri Rachman shows how *maslahah* also functions as a foundational principle in the practice of urban da'wah. When he explains that da'wah in the city often takes the form of charity, social service, and other humanitarian actions, it becomes clear that urban communities experience da'wah not merely as verbal transmission but as a concrete presence addressing social problems. From a phenomenological perspective, his statement arises from direct exposure to the needs of urban populations shaped by economic inequality, social alienation, and the pressures of daily life. For Biri, *maslahah* is realized through da'wah that responds to these realities in practical ways.

His account reveals that social action becomes a more accessible and meaningful language of da'wah. Phenomenologically, such action represents an *embodied meaning*—a meaning not only understood intellectually but felt through lived experience. When people receive assistance, moral

support, or social intervention that helps them navigate hardship, da'wah ceases to be abstract discourse and becomes a tangible presence. For Biri, *maslahah* takes shape through social closeness built through action, not merely words.

Experiences with da'wah as social engagement also shape his understanding that urban da'wah thrives in a social space that demands participation and solidarity. City life brings individuals from different backgrounds into interdependent relationships, and social action becomes a way to sustain that interconnectedness. From a phenomenological perspective, acts such as charity and community service are not merely philanthropic gestures but collective experiences that foster belonging and reduce urban isolation. In this sense, *maslahah* is the effort to strengthen social bonds.

Biri's involvement in social work shows the shift of da'wah authority from formal sermons to tangible community engagement. He observes that society tends to respect preachers or groups who directly contribute to social welfare more than those who remain confined to the pulpit. Phenomenologically, moral authority arises from witnessing a preacher's social commitment rather than their religious credentials. Here, *maslahah* and legitimacy intertwine: da'wah that produces real benefits earns public trust.

In addition, his experience reflects how urban communities evaluate da'wah based on its ability to address concrete problems. The dynamic and often challenging nature of city life requires da'wah to become solutions-oriented. Social service, charity, and community action reduce the gap between moral teachings and lived reality (Malik et al, 2024). Phenomenologically, experiencing or witnessing tangible assistance generates a deeper sense of religious meaning than purely normative sermons. For Biri, *maslahah* is da'wah that reaches the vulnerable points of daily life.

His statement that da'wah is "not only preaching" reflects a new way of understanding the function of religion in public space. For him, urban da'wah should not limit itself to verbal transmission but must expand into social empowerment, aid for the vulnerable, and strengthening solidarity. Phenomenologically, this reflects his experience that urban life demands concrete action rather than rhetoric. *Maslahah* appears as a moral response to lived social conditions.

Ultimately, these experiences affirm that *maslahah* in urban da'wah represents the meeting point between ethical Islamic values and the practical needs of the city's inhabitants. Da'wah expressed through social action not only provides assistance but also builds a more humanized shared space, reduces social distance, and strengthens the sense of belonging within urban communities. In the framework of Public Islam, these experiences show that urban da'wah gains its relevance when it creates tangible benefits in the lives of the people making *maslahah* the core of a lived, socially grounded religious practice.

Conclusion

Urban da'wah demonstrates that the religious practices of city dwellers are undergoing a fundamental transformation in line with shifts in social landscapes, public spaces, and patterns of interaction among residents. In the context of *The Phenomenon of Public Islam in Urban Da'wah Practices*, this shift signals that religion no longer operates solely within sacred spaces but increasingly inhabits the openness of public life. Da'wah now moves beyond traditional worship spaces into more fluid, inclusive, and adaptive environments. Cafés, campuses, co-working spaces,

malls, and social media platforms have become new arenas that reveal how Public Islam is practiced, shaped, and negotiated within the heterogeneity of urban life. These movements affirm that urban da'wah is an expression of Public Islam that grows through the interaction between preachers, audiences, and the dynamic social realities of the city.

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Within the framework of the democratization of religious authority one of the key components in reading Public Islam the experiences of informants reveal a profound shift in how religious authority is constructed and received. Authority is no longer anchored in figures marked by traditional symbols but in the preacher's ability to deliver messages that are relevant, contextual, and resonant with the lived experiences of urban audiences. This phenomenon illustrates how Public Islam operates through more dialogical and egalitarian relations, where members of society especially the younger generation actively determine the legitimacy of the da'wah they perceive as authentic and meaningful. Thus, the democratization of authority becomes a crucial pillar reinforcing the character of Public Islam within urban da'wah.

The orientation toward *maslahah* (public benefit), which stands out across various practices of urban da'wah, is also an integral component of the phenomenon of Public Islam. Informants describe how da'wah frequently manifests as social action charity programs, community service, mentoring initiatives, and other humanitarian efforts. Da'wah that seeks to preserve social harmony, avoid sensitive themes, and reduce potential conflict reflects how Public Islam functions as a social force that maintains coexistence within diverse urban environments. In this sense, *maslahah* is no longer merely a normative value but becomes a collective experience directly felt by urban communities.

The transformation of space in urban da'wah further clarifies the characteristics of Public Islam. Da'wah is no longer tied to formal religious venues but instead unfolds through multisited patterns appearing in hybrid public spaces, recreational areas, and digital platforms. This spatial expansion shows that urban audiences are not merely recipients of da'wah but also active agents who interpret, select, and shape da'wah spaces according to their needs. Within the context of Public Islam, these spaces become arenas for articulating religious values that are open, participatory, and contextually grounded.

Altogether, these findings indicate that the phenomenon of public Islam in urban da'wah practices is not merely about changes in location or medium, but represents a paradigmatic shift in how religion is lived, practiced, and understood within public spaces. The interplay between democratized authority and the orientation toward *maslahah* has produced a form of da'wah that aligns with the rhythms and needs of contemporary urban society. Urban da'wah not only conveys religious discourse but also functions as a social practice that strengthens solidarity and preserves social cohesion amid diversity.

Thus, this phenomenon shows that Public Islam within urban da'wah emerges as a lived, multilayered religious experience that transcends spatial, generational, and sectarian boundaries. Public Islam is visible not only in the actions of preachers but also in the ways the public responds to, experiences, and reshapes religious spaces within the ever-changing landscape of urban life.

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