

## Constructing Islamic communication research through a dialogical-dialectical approach: Evidence from Indonesia

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### Abstract

This article aims to examine the tendencies of student research in the Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI) program, particularly within the concentrations of broadcasting, journalism, and public relations at UIN Walisongo Semarang. Employing a qualitative approach combined with documentation techniques and corpus-based data analysis, the study finds that KPI research has not yet clearly defined Islamic communication within its scholarly inquiries. This article proposes a dialogical-dialectical approach to Islamic communication. Accordingly, KPI research requires: (1) integration between general theoretical/conceptual frameworks and Islamic perspectives, and (2) a balanced engagement between data on Islamic issues and general theories/concepts, or between data on general issues and Islamic theories/concepts, which will result in more open and reflexive KPI research. Both general and Islamic concepts/theories are positioned as mutually enriching and complementary. The dialogical-dialectical approach opens space for epistemic transformation in the development of Islamic communication studies. Islamic communication research should not merely replicate classical da'wah models, but also reinterpret contemporary communication dynamics while grounding them in Islamic ethical-normative values. This article contributes to the enrichment of perspectives in Islamic communication-based research.

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### Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji kecenderungan penelitian mahasiswa pada Program Studi Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam (KPI), khususnya pada konsentrasi *broadcasting*, jurnalistik, dan *public relations* di UIN Walisongo Semarang. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif yang dilakukan dengan teknik dokumentasi dan analisis data berbasis korpus, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa riset KPI belum secara jelas mendefinisikan komunikasi Islam dalam kajian-kajiannya. Artikel

### Keywords:

Islamic communication; dialogical-dialectical approach; inclusive communication; KPI

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ini mengusulkan pendekatan dialogis-dialektis dalam komunikasi Islam. Oleh karena itu, penelitian KPI memerlukan: (1) integrasi antara kerangka teoretis/konseptual umum dengan perspektif Islam, dan (2) keterlibatan yang seimbang antara data tentang isu-isu keislaman dengan teori/konsep umum, atau antara data tentang isu-isu umum dengan teori/konsep Islam, yang pada akhirnya akan menghasilkan penelitian KPI yang lebih terbuka dan reflektif. Baik konsep/teori umum maupun Islam diposisikan sebagai yang saling memperkaya dan melengkapi. Pendekatan dialogis-dialektis ini membuka ruang bagi transformasi epistemik dalam pengembangan studi komunikasi Islam. Penelitian komunikasi Islam tidak seharusnya hanya mereplikasi model dakwah klasik, tetapi juga perlu menafsirkan ulang dinamika komunikasi kontemporer dengan tetap berpijak pada nilai-nilai etis-normatif Islam. Artikel ini berkontribusi dalam memperkaya perspektif dalam penelitian berbasis komunikasi Islam.

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## INTRODUCTION

The study of Islamic communication has emerged as a significant field of inquiry alongside the establishment of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI) programs across Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. However, the scholarly research underpinning its disciplinary development continues to face a fundamental challenge, particularly concerning how Islamic communication and broadcasting research ought to be conducted. This study seeks to offer an alternative approach that can effectively bridge Islamic communication and general communication studies.

Studies of Islamic communication published in academic journals tend to remain confined to normative analyses or case studies of religious institutions (Islamic/da'wah institutions), and have not yet succeeded in generating new theoretical contributions from their findings (Tahir & Rayhaniah, 2021; Kusnadi et.al., 2021; Harun, 2021; Fikruzzaman & Arsyad, 2021; Adeni et.al., 2021). In general, researchers of Islamic communication in Indonesia employ general communication theories as analytical tools (Anggraeni, 2020; Nidzom & Pradana, 2022). However, they rarely attempt to construct new theoretical expositions based on empirical findings derived from Islamic/da'wah-based field data in order to critique or enrich established communication theories.

Moreover, references on Islamic communication remain limited. Existing studies largely rely on Harjani Hefni's (2017) book *Komunikasi Islam*, which primarily focuses on the normative aspects of Islamic communication and pays little—if any—attention to empirical dimensions. Bakti (2020) has introduced a relatively progressive discourse on Islamic communication by examining it from multiple perspectives; however, this work has not yet been consolidated into a comprehensive book or article that can be widely

cited. A book by Iswandi Syahputra (2017), *Paradigma Komunikasi Profetik: Gagasan dan Pendekatan*, deserves recognition for its empirical approach in discussing prophetic communication, yet it has not provided a clear operational framework for Islamic communication studies. Similarly, international scholarly interest in Islamic communication remains limited, with only a few notable contributors such as Galander (2002), Hamid Mowlana (2007), Ali Ayish (2003), Gholam Khiabany (2010), Kasmani et al. (2017), and Al Owaid (2021).

In practice, existing studies do not concretely define how Islamic communication research should be conducted. The majority tend to position Islamic communication as primarily moralistic communication. Given that Islamic communication constitutes a foundational basis of the Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI) program, while at the same time, there remains a lack of clarity regarding which Islamic perspectives are employed, this study seeks to address this gap.

The central academic question posed is how such a framework can be operationalized within concrete research contexts. In other words, what kind of approach can effectively bridge Islamic communication research and general communication studies, and what forms of integration between these domains can be identified? To this end, this study examines undergraduate theses produced by students of the KPI program at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, UIN Walisongo Semarang, by mapping the potentials of Islamic communication addressed and developing a research model grounded in both normative and empirical approaches.

The main argument advanced is that Islamic communication research across these concentrations should be conducted within a dialogical-dialectical and inclusive framework. This argument is based on the understanding that Islamic communication studies evolve as part of the broader historical dynamics of communication.

## **METHODS**

This study adopts a qualitative approach due to the complex nature of the data, which requires in-depth interpretation. The interpretive paradigm is employed as the epistemological foundation for examining and understanding trends in Islamic communication research within the concentrations of broadcasting, journalism, and public relations. The interpretive paradigm views social reality not as objective and singular, but as socially constructed through language, symbols, and human interaction. In this context, research does not aim to discover absolute truths, but rather to understand the subjective meanings constructed and experienced by KPI students (undergraduate researchers) in formulating, structuring, and narrating their studies in Islamic communication.

The study employs both normative and empirical approaches in Islamic studies (Abuddin Nata, 2016). The normative approach is used to explore value-based dimensions derived from Islamic teachings or broadly accepted fundamental Islamic principles. Meanwhile, the empirical approach is used to examine the lived realities of Muslim communities, including intra-Muslim relations as well as interactions with non-Muslims, across various domains such as social, political, economic, and cultural life. These two approaches are essential for developing a model of Islamic studies applicable to issues in broadcasting, journalism, and public relations.

This study utilizes several models of Islamic communication as analytical frameworks:

*Tabligh-Ummah-based model*

Islamic communication is oriented toward constructing narratives in the public sphere within the context of the Muslim community (*ummah*), aiming to strengthen communal identity as a response to elements of Western modernity. Consequently, communication studies within this model tend to emphasize the construction of Islamic narratives in opposition to Western communication paradigms.

*Divine-human model*

Islamic communication emphasizes the relationship between God and human beings as a form of transcendental communication that underpins all forms of human communication in everyday life. All communication practices are grounded in a moral framework rooted in the human relationship with the Divine. Thus, communication research within this model is expected to be anchored in Islamic moral principles.

*Dialogical-dialectical model*

Islamic communication opens space for dialogue between what is considered “Islamic” and “non-Islamic,” allowing communication studies to adopt beneficial elements from various realities, including local contexts, without rigidly adhering to or labeling them as “Islamic.” This approach also rejects hostility toward Western civilization.

These three conceptual models are employed to analyze Islamic communication research conducted within the concentrations of broadcasting, journalism, and public relations in the KPI program at the Faculty of Da’wah and Communication, UIN Walisongo Semarang.

The primary data for this study are derived from academic documents available in the digital library of UIN Walisongo Semarang. Data collection is conducted through documentation techniques, involving several stages: (1) identifying and collecting

academic works related to Islamic communication, including undergraduate theses, and other scholarly works; (2) downloading and storing these documents for analysis; (3) reading and annotating relevant sections aligned with the research objectives; and (4) capturing screenshots or scanning specific sections that cannot be converted into textual data.

Data analysis is conducted concurrently with data collection. The analytical stages include: (1) data collection through documentation; (2) data reduction by focusing on information relevant to the research objectives while discarding irrelevant data; (3) data presentation in narrative form by categorizing findings based on thematic similarities, followed by mapping research topics and thesis titles from KPI students between 2020 and 2023 in tables and graphical formats; (4) corpus-based data analysis to identify trends and dominant patterns in student research topics; (5) developing discussions on the patterns of integration of Islamic communication within the concentrations of broadcasting, journalism, and public relations, leading to the formulation of a relevant research model; and (6) validating data through cross-checking between multiple sources.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

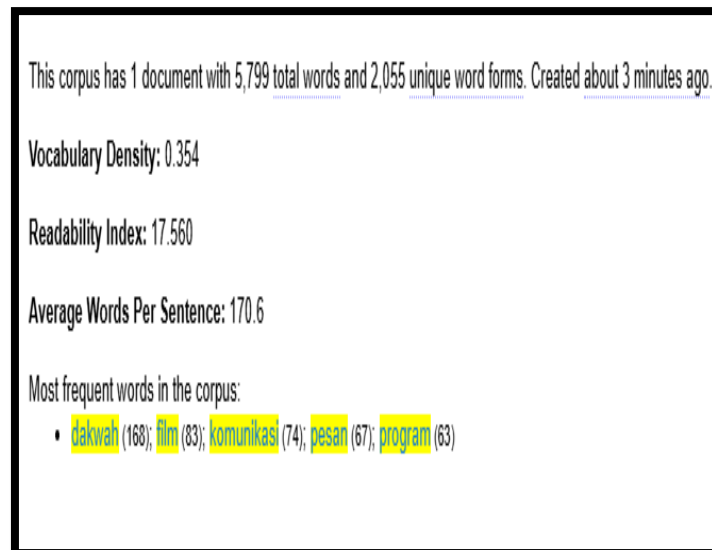
### **The dominance of the *tabligh-ummah (da'wah)* paradigm in the corpus**

#### *Corpus content*

This aspect presents various tendencies in research titles derived from the repository of UIN Walisongo Semarang. Based on the corpus analysis, the most striking finding is that the most frequently used words in the titles are “da’wah” (168 occurrences), “film” (83), “communication” (74), and “program” (63) (see Figure 1). This indicates that:

- a. The majority of KPI student research includes the term *da'wah* in their titles, suggesting that da’wah remains the primary orientation in their studies.
- b. “Film” reflects a frequently used medium as an object of study, particularly da’wah-themed films.
- c. “Communication” relates to specific communication focuses employed by students, such as communication strategies, da’wah communication, communication techniques, intercultural communication, and Islamic communication.
- d. “Message” indicates a tendency among students to analyze messages in media such as films and novels, particularly in relation to da’wah.
- e. “Program” refers to da’wah programs within media content.

Interestingly, however, the corpus does not report a dominance of the terms “Islam” or “Islamic.” This suggests that students tend to equate da’wah with Islamic studies, even though they often fail to articulate da’wah concepts as part of the broader and more complex domain of Islamic scholarship.



**Figure 1. Corpus content**

### *Cirrus*

This section visualizes the most frequently used words. As noted earlier, the term “da’wah” appears as the most prominent and dominant word compared to others (see Figures 2 and 3). The visual dominance of “da’wah” further reinforces the finding that student research is largely conducted within a da’wah framework, thereby supporting the *tabligh-ummah* argument proposed earlier.



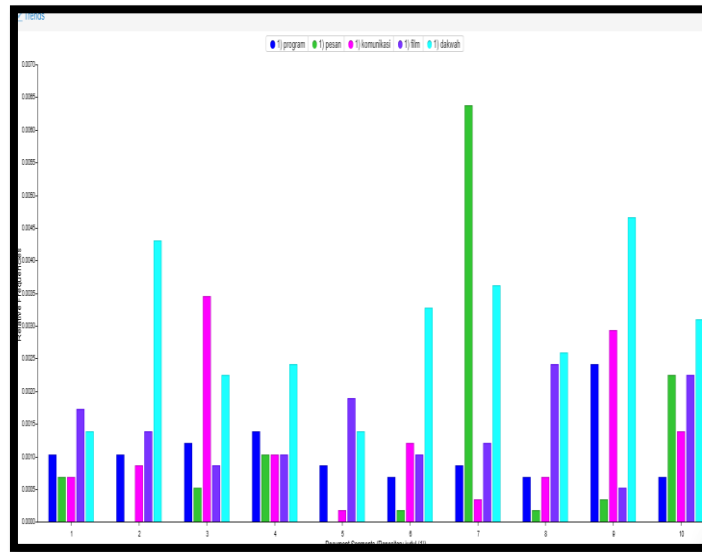


Figure 4. Trend and StreamGraph 1

Similarly, the following figure demonstrates that the term “da’wah” (highlighted in blue) dominates almost all graphical streams, consistently occupying the central horizontal position and overshadowing other streams (see Figure 5). This further confirms that da’wah is central to nearly all areas of student research focus.

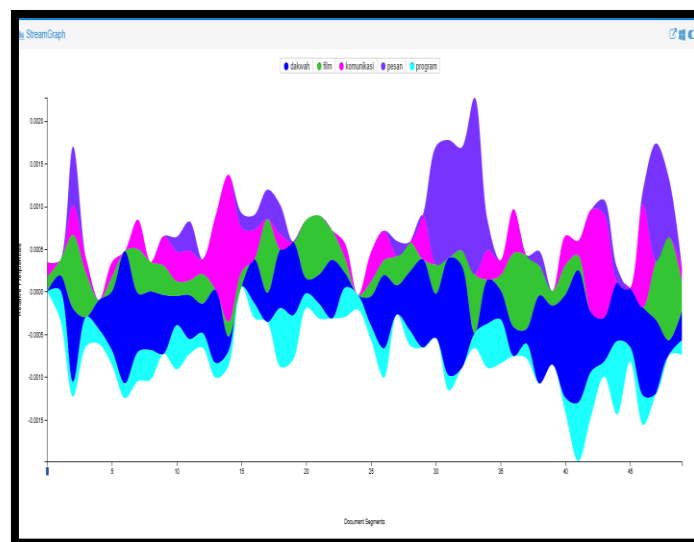


Figure 5. Trend and StreamGraph 1

**Collocation**

This section examines the co-occurrence relationships between words. For instance, the term “radio” collocates with “FM” 45 times; “message” with “da’wah” 34 times; “YouTube” with “da’wah” (or vice versa) 32 times; “communication” with “da’wah” 27 times; “media” with “da’wah” 26 times; and “program” with “da’wah” 25 times, as illustrated in Figures 6 and 7.

| Term       | Collocate  | Count (times) |
|------------|------------|---------------|
| radio      | fm         | 45            |
| pesan      | da'wah     | 34            |
| da'wah     | youtube    | 32            |
| youtube    | da'wah     | 32            |
| komunikasi | da'wah     | 27            |
| media      | da'wah     | 26            |
| program    | da'wah     | 25            |
| analisa    | film       | 23            |
| radio      | da'wah     | 23            |
| film       | pesan      | 22            |
| film       | analisa    | 22            |
| pesan      | film       | 22            |
| da'wah     | komunikasi | 21            |
| media      | studi      | 21            |
| film       | islami     | 20            |
| komunikasi | islam      | 19            |
| program    | radio      | 19            |
| radio      | program    | 19            |
| da'wah     | studi      | 18            |
| da'wah     | program    | 18            |
| program    | siaran     | 18            |
| da'wah     | radio      | 17            |
| da'wah     | islam      | 17            |
| da'wah     | semarang   | 16            |

**Figure 6. Collocation 1**

| Term       | Collocate    | Count (times) |
|------------|--------------|---------------|
| media      | online       | 16            |
| radio      | siaran       | 15            |
| da'wah     | ustadz       | 14            |
| pesan      | karya        | 14            |
| da'wah     | tv           | 13            |
| da'wah     | strategi     | 13            |
| da'wah     | fm           | 13            |
| da'wah     | ai           | 13            |
| film       | representasi | 13            |
| komunikasi | persuasi     | 13            |
| pesan      | lirik        | 13            |
| media      | sosial       | 13            |
| da'wah     | media        | 12            |
| da'wah     | film         | 12            |
| da'wah     | islam        | 12            |
| film       | da'wah       | 12            |
| komunikasi | semarang     | 12            |
| radio      | data         | 12            |
| film       | islam        | 11            |
| komunikasi | fm           | 11            |
| islam      | da'wah       | 11            |
| da'wah     | da'wah       | 10            |
| da'wah     | analisa      | 10            |
| film       | citra        | 10            |

**Figure 7. Collocation 2**

These findings further reinforce the argument that the term “da’wah” is closely associated with nearly all major research focuses among students. However, it is also noteworthy that “communication” collocates with “Islam” only 19 times, and “film” with

“Islam” only 11 times. This suggests that “Islamic communication” does not dominate scholarly discourse and has not yet become a central research tendency across KPI specializations.

The data indicate that student research across the three concentrations demonstrates limited engagement with Islamic communication as a distinct analytical framework. In most cases, the concept of Islamic communication is implicitly equated with da’wah, resulting in the two terms being used interchangeably. This tendency suggests that Islamic communication has not yet been sufficiently developed as an independent conceptual lens within student research. While Islamic communication and da’wah share several common foundations, they represent different conceptual traditions and therefore require clearer theoretical differentiation.

From the perspective of da’wah studies, da’wah encompasses a broad range of activities extending beyond verbal preaching (*bi al-lisan*) to include action-oriented practices (*bi al-hal*) (Gunawan & Muhid, 2022). Its manifestations include development-oriented da’wah, empowerment-based da’wah, counseling da’wah, cultural da’wah, structural da’wah, and various other forms (al-Bayanuni, 2001; Nurhaidah et.al., 2024). Because of its comprehensive scope and normative orientation, some scholars position Islamic communication as a more specific communicative dimension within da’wah, particularly within the domain of *da’wah bi al-lisan*.

Conversely, another line of scholarship argues that the relationship operates in the opposite direction: *da’wah bi al-lisan* constitutes only one component of the broader field of Islamic communication (Bakti, 2003). This perspective emphasizes that Islamic communication cannot be reduced to the act of inviting others toward goodness, which is often regarded as the primary objective of da’wah (Aini, 2017; Hussain, 2009). Rather, Islamic communication refers to everyday communicative practices guided by Islamic ethical principles, including honesty, justice, compassion, and respect for human dignity (Dhona, 2024). Individuals may engage in Islamic communication without any explicit intention to preach, persuade, or encourage others to adopt particular religious beliefs. In this sense, Islamic communication extends beyond the conventional boundaries of da’wah and encompasses a wider spectrum of human interaction.

Despite these differences, the distinction between Islamic communication and da’wah should not be overstated. Both concepts share a common ethical foundation rooted in Islamic moral values and concern for human well-being (Thahir & Rayhaniyah, 2022). Their close relationship partly explains why many student researchers tend to merge the two concepts. However, such conceptual overlap may also hinder the development of Islamic communication as a robust analytical framework, as it becomes

absorbed into the broader discourse of da'wah rather than being theorized on its own terms.

The findings therefore reveal not only a limited use of Islamic communication as an analytical approach but also an underlying conceptual ambiguity regarding its relationship with da'wah. To address this challenge, this study proposes a dialogical-dialectical approach to Islamic communication research. Rather than positioning communication studies, da'wah studies, and Islamic studies as separate or competing domains, this approach encourages a productive dialogue among them. Through such engagement, Islamic communication can be developed as a meaningful analytical framework that draws from Islamic intellectual traditions while remaining open to insights from contemporary communication scholarship. Consequently, Islamic communication is understood not merely as a rhetorical label attached to research topics but as a theoretical perspective capable of generating new explanations, interpretations, and research agendas.

### **Critical review of KPI specialization research**

#### *Issues in methodological approaches*

One of the primary challenges in integrating Islamic communication into the three KPI specializations lies in the methodological approaches employed. Our findings indicate that the majority of undergraduate theses still rely heavily on normative-theological approaches grounded in da'wah, which tend to cite Qur'anic verses and Hadith primarily as tools of justification (i.e., determining right and wrong) rather than as interpretive lenses.

In fact, Islamic communication approaches can position religious texts not merely as theological instruments, but also as narratives that shape the social, cultural, and political practices of Muslim communities. Accordingly, qualitative methods employing interpretive, phenomenological, or even ethnographic strategies (Creswell, 2013) are crucial for exploring Islamic communication dynamics in more empirical contexts.

#### *Issues in topic selection*

Our findings also reveal that research in journalism, broadcasting, and public relations within the domain of Islamic communication predominantly focuses on themes such as religious broadcasting, da'wah rhetoric, da'wah content, da'wah strategies, or the framing of Islamic news. However, a wide range of alternative topics remains underexplored, including interreligious communication in television programming, the image of Islam in public relations campaigns of zakat institutions, and the practice of peace journalism in *pesantren*-based media (Adeni, 2023; 2022). We argue that research

orientation should be expanded toward more contextual directions. By broadening research objects and themes, the contribution of Islamic communication within these specializations will become more substantial and diverse.

#### *Issues of scientific dichotomization*

Our findings also confirm the persistent dichotomization between Islamic communication and Western communication. While such a perspective may be justified by referring to scholars such as Mowlana (2007) and Ayish (2003), the lack of a robust epistemological framework underpinning this dichotomy remains problematic. At the same time, Islamic communication studies cannot fully detach themselves from the influence of general communication theories. It is therefore necessary to critique exclusive modes of thinking that sharply separate Western and Islamic theories. Islamic communication should indeed appreciate norms and contexts rooted in Islamic traditions, yet it should not deny its interconnectedness with external realities. Its role is not to reject or “Islamize” Western theories outright, but rather to create a space for equal dialogue.

We argue that several Western communication concepts—such as framing, agenda-setting, and uses and gratifications—can be epistemologically accommodated. When contextualized within Islamic values, these concepts can offer new analytical dimensions, while Islamic principles, in turn, can contribute to refining and enriching these theoretical frameworks.

#### *Issues in research content*

The data also indicate that KPI students tend to focus on analyzing religious or da’wah messages in digital spaces, often through various forms of content analysis. However, in the era of platformization and algorithmic systems, students must also understand how Islamic values interact with communication systems driven by business logics and data economies. Consequently, Islamic communication studies should engage with broader discourses such as media economics, media privatization, and creative media industries (Cohen, 2019; Adeni, 2020; Adeni & Bakti, 2016). In other words, digital Islamic communication studies should not be limited to da’wah on social media, but should also critically examine and intervene in digital media systems to promote justice, humanity, and spirituality.

#### *Issues in media textualism*

Islamic communication studies among KPI students tend to focus heavily on religious texts in media—particularly in digital media studies—without situating them

within broader socio-cultural practices. Their research often lacks attention to processes of meaning-making within social contexts, resulting in a predominantly textualist approach.

Critical questions such as how Islamic messages are constructed by content creators, interpreted by audiences or netizens, and utilized in everyday life remain underexplored. Similarly, the shift of religion from offline to online spaces has not been sufficiently addressed. Therefore, approaches such as semiotics, hermeneutics, and cultural studies should be maximized to analyze Islamic communication in contemporary contexts.

#### *Issues in conceptualization*

Most students have not yet succeeded in clearly positioning Islamic communication in relation to general communication within their research. First, Islamic concepts and general communication concepts often operate separately, whereas they should be dialogically integrated to produce new conceptual syntheses—this is what we refer to as conceptualization. Second, both Islamic and general communication frameworks must be actively engaged within theoretical discussions and linked to empirical findings, so that research contributions to KPI scholarship become evident.

### **Research approaches in KPI specializations and the model of inclusive Islamic communication**

#### *Interrelation of Islamic communication approaches*

As previously discussed, there are three primary approaches in KPI research: the *tabligh-ummah* approach, the divine-human approach, and the dialogical-dialectical approach. A comprehensive KPI research model should integrate these three approaches.

The *tabligh-ummah* approach is the most dominant and widely recognized in Islamic communication studies. Islamic da'wah practices often reflect this model. However, relying solely on *tabligh-ummah* is insufficient, as it tends to emphasize communication as the production, dissemination, and reception of messages for community-building purposes (Mowlana, 2007), without adequately considering broader communicative dynamics beyond the formation of the *ummah*.

Therefore, the divine-human approach is also necessary, emphasizing that Islamic communication research must possess a strong transcendental orientation (Ayish, 2003). Although Dhona (2024) critiques the assumption that Islamic communication emerges purely from religious traditions, communication research cannot ignore the importance of moral and ethical values. In Islamic terminology, these values are encapsulated in *akhlaq al-karimah*. The importance of ethical considerations in communication studies

has also been acknowledged by Griffin (2023), who notes that all forms of knowledge carry ethical implications that must not be overlooked.

Numerous studies in Islamic communication have emphasized moral concerns (Hasan, 2024; Hefni, 2017; Koroglu, 2011). In an era marked by manipulation, hate speech, and misinformation, Islamic communication offers a strong moral foundation. Values such as trustworthiness (*amanah*), honesty, patience, and compassion serve as essential guidelines for communication practices across contexts. This moral emphasis extends beyond the *tabligh-ummah* approach.

However, the combination of *tabligh-ummah* and divine-human approaches alone is insufficient to advance Islamic communication research. Khiabany (2007) critiques Islamic communication for being trapped in exclusive traditionalism. In some cases, research grounded in these approaches resembles religious sermons rather than scholarly inquiry, relying on normative judgments rather than critical analysis (Khiabany, 2010). This tendency undermines the scientific credibility of Islamic communication studies.

In several undergraduate theses, we found the frequent use of the term “Islamic perspective.” In fact, this usage represents a minimal form of academic engagement in KPI research and often lacks scientific rigor (Dhona, 2024). By framing research solely through an “Islamic perspective,” researchers may prematurely impose normative judgments, limiting their ability to explore alternative dimensions beyond religious frameworks.

Therefore, Islamic communication research cannot remain confined to *tabligh-ummah* and divine-human approaches alone. A more open and inclusive framework is required—namely, the dialogical-dialectical approach. This approach expands the horizons of Islamic communication by encouraging dialogue with diverse perspectives, including those rooted in secular worldviews.

### *The urgency of the dialogical-dialectical approach*

There are several reasons why the dialogical-dialectical approach is essential in KPI research:

*First*, it enables conceptual interaction between communication as a modern discipline and Islamic values derived from revelation. Islamic communication is thus understood not merely as “Islamicized communication,” but as a scientific process rooted in Islamic principles while remaining open to conceptual development. This aligns with al-Attas’s (1995) view of Islamization as a process of reconstructing meaning rather than rejecting non-Islamic knowledge. *Second*, it encourages the exploration of Islamic concepts within contemporary contexts. Concepts such as *rahmah* (compassion), *‘adl*

(justice), *shura* (consultation), and *amanah* (trust) can be dialogically engaged with modern communication concepts such as fairness, transparency, participation, and trust. For example, *tabayyun* in the Qur'an can be discussed alongside media literacy and fact-checking, while *tabligh* can be related to diffusion of innovation, and *ukhuwah* to communitarianism. These integrations demonstrate that Islamic communication offers not only moral guidance but also conceptual innovation.

*Third*, the approach facilitates the reconstruction of Islamic communication epistemology by integrating revelation (Qur'an and Hadith), reason, and historical experience. This provides a deeper philosophical foundation for understanding communication as a value-laden human process. *Fourth*, it takes into account the socio-cultural context of Muslim societies, particularly in Indonesia, which is pluralistic and open. This ensures that Islamic communication research remains relevant not only to Muslim communities but also to broader public discourse.

*Fifth*, methodologically, it encourages qualitative-interpretive approaches with thematic or critical analysis, emphasizing meaning-making rather than mere description. *Sixth*, in educational contexts, it supports curriculum development that fosters critical, analytical, and transformative thinking among students. *Seventh*, in media studies, it expands research beyond religious content to include production structures, power relations, algorithms, and information governance, linking concepts such as *hisbah* with media accountability.

*Eighth*, it promotes interdisciplinary collaboration with fields such as anthropology, sociology, politics, gender studies, and technology. *Ninth*, it addresses criticisms of Islamic communication as overly apologetic and normative by strengthening its scientific rigor and global relevance. *Tenth*, it advances democratic communication practices that emphasize justice (*'adl*), excellence (*ihsan*), and compassion (*rahmah*). *Eleventh*, it orients Islamic communication research toward social transformation, contributing to the development of a just, civil, and tolerant society.

#### *The model of inclusive Islamic communication*

The dialogical-dialectical approach forms the foundation of an inclusive model of Islamic communication (see Figure 8), both at the level of research and practice. This approach allows established Western communication concepts to be integrated with Islamic concepts, producing new syntheses and fostering inclusive research.

Through this approach, Islamic communication research is not limited to explicitly Islamic objects of study but can also engage with broader communication phenomena, analyzed through a dialectical engagement with Islamic principles. Islamic concepts can

both receive critique from and contribute to Western communication theories (Dhona, 2024).

In this context, Islamic communication research should demonstrate distinctiveness and originality (Kurnia et.al., 2024). Indonesia’s local context provides fertile ground for developing more open and inclusive models of Islamic communication research. Ultimately, such research becomes not only normatively grounded but also conceptually robust.

Inclusive Islamic communication research, therefore, represents an approach that balances ethical integrity with conceptual innovation. This perspective resonates with Ang’s (2024) view that Indonesia—despite being a Muslim-majority country without Islam as an official state religion—offers a strategic context for developing open communication models that promote tolerance, democracy, unity, and social justice while maintaining strong moral foundations.

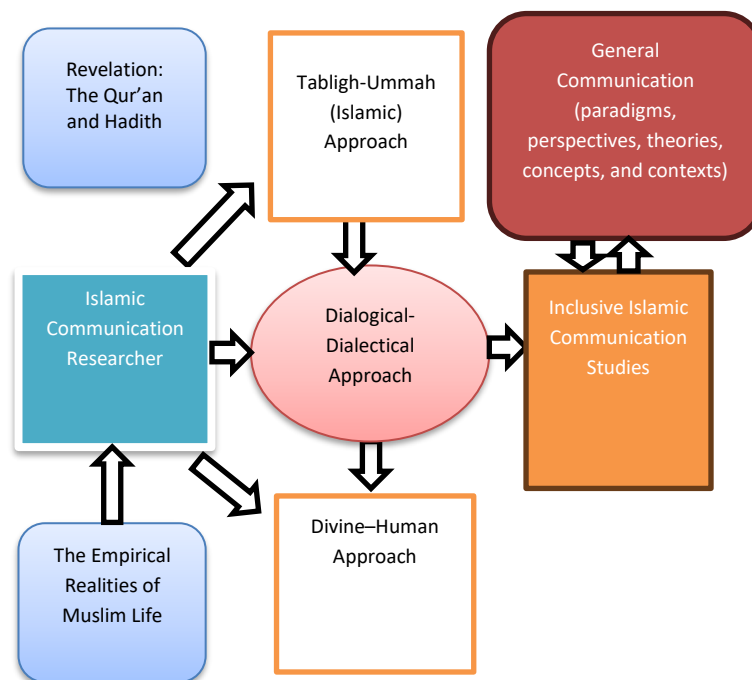


Figure 8: Inclusive Islamic Communication Model

## The application of an inclusive Islamic communication model in program specializations

### *Integrative insights in inclusive communication*

The application of an inclusive Islamic communication model (see Table 1) within the contexts of broadcasting, journalism, and public relations can be undertaken by first understanding the academic positioning of each field. Accordingly, mastery of the core

concepts within these three areas is essential prior to conducting related studies or research. Such mastery should encompass not only concepts developed by scholars within Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI), but also those from general communication scholarship.

The implementation of inclusivity in these three specializations is not merely intended to: (1) move Islamic communication studies beyond a narrow framework that confines broadcasting, journalism, and public relations research solely to Islamic issues or objects; (2) open academic dialogue between empirical findings on Islamic social realities and theoretical constructs from general communication studies; and (3) integrate general communication theories with Islamic concepts in a balanced manner. Rather, it also seeks to challenge the assumption that Western communication theories must be “Islamized.” An inclusive approach does not Islamize Western theories, but instead creates a space for critical and balanced dialogue between them.

Research in broadcasting, journalism, and public relations should not be limited to the use of da’wah-based concepts alone, although they are closely related. In addition to employing da’wah concepts—as commonly done by KPI students at UIN Walisongo—researchers can also engage with broader communication literature. Griffin, for instance, identifies at least 33 theories within communication and media studies, while other works offer extensive theoretical frameworks across journalism, public relations, and broadcasting (Littlejohn & Foss, 2017), all of which can serve as analytical tools.

For example, in journalism, fundamental principles such as objectivity, accuracy, and fairness can be reinterpreted through the lens of *maqāṣid al-sharī’ah*. Objectivity is not merely neutrality, but an effort to uphold justice (*‘adl*) and avoid harm to others. Accuracy in Islam is not only factual correctness but also moral truthfulness. In this way, Islamic journalism can contribute significantly to the development of global journalistic ethics.

In broadcasting, production and dissemination processes can be analyzed through the concept of *amr ma’rūf nahy munkar*, not in a literal sense, but as an ethical framework for public communication (Bakti & Lecomte, 2015). Media programs that promote diversity, tolerance, and social justice may represent forms of humanistic and progressive Islamic communication. Thus, Islamic communication is concerned not only with “what is said,” but also “how” and “to whom” messages are conveyed.

In public relations, the challenge is even greater, as the field is closely tied to issues of image and persuasion. Here, Islamic communication offers principles such as honesty (*ṣidq*), social responsibility (*mas’ūliyyah*), and commitment to justice. Public relations strategies within Islamic institutions should aim not only to build positive images but also

to foster trust and sustainable social relationships. Islamic PR is not cosmetic PR, but ethical PR.

At the same time, general communication theories are not without limitations and are sometimes not fully contextualized for Islamic objects of study. Since most general theories are produced within Western contexts, they do not always adequately address local social realities. Scholars such as Ang (2024), Kurnia et.al, (2024), and Dhona (2024) therefore emphasize the importance of locality-based communication. Indonesia, as a Muslim-majority context with unique socio-cultural characteristics, provides a fertile ground for developing Islamic communication scholarship and even critiquing the dominance of Western communication paradigms.

Nevertheless, a key task for researchers across these specializations is not only to understand general communication theories but also to critically engage and bridge them with Islamic concepts. Islamic intellectual traditions are vast and historically rich, offering significant contributions to the development of Islamic communication. As Griffin (2023) notes, communication is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing from multiple fields. Accordingly, Islamic concepts from various disciplines—Islamic law, economics, politics, Qur’anic exegesis, and Hadith studies—can all contribute to the construction of Islamic communication. Thus, Islamic communication is not solely derived from da’wah studies but from a broader intellectual tradition.

**Table 1. Application of the dialogical-dialectical approach model**

| <b>Object of Study</b>          | <b>Problem Focus</b>                     | <b>Bridging Theoretical Framework</b> | <b>Data Discussion</b>  |
|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Religious/Islamic Object</b> | Refers to Islamic issues under study     | Islamic theories/concepts             | Highlighting the uniqueness of Islamic data   |
|                                 |  | General communication theories        | Engaging Islamic findings with general communication theories<br><br>Critiquing or enriching general communication theories |
| <b>General Object</b>           | Refers to general (non-religious) issues | General communication theories        | Highlighting the uniqueness of general data   |
|                                 |  | Islamic theories/concepts             | Engaging non-religious findings with Islamic theories<br><br>Critiquing or enriching Islamic theories                       |

The inclusive model in Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI) research is a response to the need to bridge Islamic concepts and general communication theories. Table 1 presents a simple yet fundamental framework in explaining how objects of study (both Islamic and general) can be examined by integrating two sources of theory, thereby producing more open and reflective data discussions.

In the first row, the object of study is religious or Islamic in nature, for example issues of digital da'wah, narratives of religious moderation, or the promotion of Islamic values in media. Such research can employ Islamic theories such as *tabligh*, *uswah*, *amr ma'rūf nahi munkar*, or the approach of *da'wah bil hal*. However, philosophically, these concepts can be linked with general communication theories such as framing theory, agenda setting, or the narrative paradigm. This integration helps to understand how Islamic communication practices operate within complex social fields.

For example, in the field of Public Relations, a study on the communication strategies of zakat institutions aiming to build public trust can employ the concept of trust building from general PR theory such as the two-way symmetrical model of Grunig & Hunt, while also relating it to the Islamic concepts of *amanah* and *shiddiq*. Since the Islamic object under study is a zakat institution, there is room for serious academic discussion between empirical realities of Islamic institutions and existing theoretical constructs.

In the field of broadcasting, research can examine the phenomenon of da'wah broadcasts on local television. For instance, in analyzing a local *ustadz* delivering sermons in television programs packaged in the form of talk shows or reality TV, addressing issues such as family harmony (*keluarga sakinah*), child education, and others, researchers may use Islamic communication concepts such as *qawlan sadīdan* (truthful speech). At the same time, the effectiveness of such speech can be linked to how it resonates with audiences. Therefore, general communication theories such as media effects theory or uses and gratifications theory can be integrated to examine audience responses. This integration shows that da'wah is not merely the transfer of moral messages, but also concerns the accessibility and reception of messages by audiences.

Meanwhile, in the field of journalism, Islamic objects of study can be drawn from Islamic media content such as *Republika*, *NU Online*, or *Islami.co*. To analyze how narratives of religious moderation are framed in news coverage, researchers may employ framing theory or critical discourse analysis from general journalism studies to unpack patterns of representation and meaning construction. Philosophically, Islamic theories such as *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* can be integrated as an ethical foundation. *Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* can serve as a basis to evaluate the extent to which framing practices produce

benefit or harm for humanity, and to critique hidden intentions behind media texts. In this way, an integrative approach can offer a critical stance toward dominant discourses.

On the other hand, the second row of the table shows that objects of study may consist of general issues such as climate change, local politics, or popular culture, yet still be examined from an Islamic perspective. For instance, a KPI student may study how crisis communication is conducted by local governments in responding to natural disasters. The researcher can employ crisis communication theory from PR (such as Situational Crisis Communication Theory) and philosophically relate it to Islamic values such as *tawakkal*, *ikhtiar*, and *musyawarah*. In this case, the general issue remains relevant within the framework of Islamic communication.

In the field of broadcasting, an example of a general issue that can be examined is the presentation of social reality programs depicting the lives of minority communities. Although not explicitly religious, KPI researchers can approach this through concepts such as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, Islamic pluralism, and Islamic broadcasting ethics. At the same time, representation theory and encoding/decoding theory from Stuart Hall can be employed to analyze how meaning is constructed and interpreted by audiences. This demonstrates how Islamic theories can enrich the study of social issues with ethical and spiritual perspectives.

In the domain of journalism, general issues such as the coverage of violence against women can become important objects of KPI research. In addition to employing media feminism theory or gatekeeping theory, researchers can relate these issues to Islamic values of gender justice, protection of women (*hifz al-nafs*), and the journalistic responsibility (*amanah*) to represent marginalized voices. This approach offers a new epistemic contribution to journalism, showing that Islamic values can provide moral direction and critical correction to contemporary journalistic practices.

Overall, Table 5 demonstrates epistemological flexibility in KPI research. Students and researchers are not required to rigidly choose between Islamic theories and Western theories, but may instead treat both as sources of knowledge that mutually enrich one another. This integration, however, must not be carried out mechanically (which would lead to technical Islamization), but through balanced critical and analytical engagement. In other words, Islamic theories should not merely be appended, but should genuinely function as theoretical lenses for interpreting communication phenomena.

With this approach, the KPI program can develop research that is not only contextual but also contributive to the broader development of communication studies. Through critical dialogue between Islam and general communication science, KPI research will not be trapped in apologetics or mere ideological positioning, but will

emerge as a robust, open, and relevant academic discourse in addressing contemporary challenges.

Examples of research in public relations, broadcasting, and journalism

Table 2. Research topics on Islamic objects

| Field            | Research Title  | Problem   | Concept/Theory Integration  | Method  | Data and Theoretical Discussion  |
|------------------|---|---|---|---|--|
| Public Relations | Islamic PR Strategy in Enhancing the Image of <i>Pesantren</i> in the Digital Era | How can Islamic-based PR strategies build institutional image in digital competition? | Two-way symmetrical model (Grunig & Hunt)<br><br>Islamic values: <i>amanah, tabligh, sidq</i> | Interpretive qualitative case study                   | Findings show transparency and honesty support symmetrical PR theory, demonstrating compatibility between Islamic values and modern PR practices |
| Broadcasting     | Digital Da'wah Narratives in the Podcast " <i>Ngaji Filsafat</i> "                | How are religious narratives constructed in digital podcast broadcasting?             | Narrative theory<br><br><i>Maw'izhah hasanah and hikmah</i> (Qur'an An-Nahl:125)              | Constructivist, virtual ethnography, content analysis | Findings indicate storytelling formats effectively convey Islamic values, aligning narrative theory with Islamic communication principles        |
| Journalism       | Islamic Journalistic Ethics in Reporting Religious Issues in Online Media         | How do Muslim journalists apply Islamic ethics in sensitive reporting?                | Journalistic code of ethics<br><br>Islamic values: <i>'adl, taqwa</i>                         | Interpretive qualitative interviews                   | Journalists apply Islamic moral considerations to maintain balance and avoid misinformation, enriching conventional journalism ethics            |

**Table 3. Research topics on general objects**

| Field            | Research Title   | Problem   | Concept Integration  | Method                                 | Data and Theoretical Discussion  |
|------------------|--|---|--|--|--|
| Public Relations | Government PR Strategy in Managing COVID-19 Vaccination Crisis | How is crisis communication used to encourage public acceptance?  | Crisis communication theory (Coombs)<br><br>Islamic values: <i>maṣlaḥah</i> , <i>ḍarūrah</i> | Interpretive case study                | Findings show crisis strategies aligned with public good and urgency principles, enriching crisis communication theory |
| Broadcasting     | Gender Representation in Television Beauty Advertisements      | How are women represented and how does it affect body perception? | Representation theory (Stuart Hall)<br><br>Islamic values: <i>'iffah</i> , <i>'izzah</i>     | Critical content and semiotic analysis | Findings show over-sexualized representation reduces dignity; Islamic values provide ethical critique                  |
| Journalism       | Media Framing of Student Protests (2023)                       | How do media frame protests and influence public opinion?         | Framing theory (Entman)<br><br>Islamic values: <i>'adl</i> , <i>amanah</i>                   | Constructivist framing analysis        | Findings reveal bias in coverage; Islamic values provide ethical evaluation of journalistic responsibility             |

The integration of Islamic and general communication concepts—central to the inclusive Islamic communication model—encourages a re-examination of established assumptions in Islamic communication studies. Traditionally, Islamic communication has been narrowly understood as part of da’wah, often limited to verbal and normative dimensions. In fact, its essence is far broader and more dynamic. It encompasses not only religious messages but also values, practices, and relationships embedded in everyday life.

We argue that Islamic communication includes everyday practices grounded in individual and collective experiences within Muslim contexts and beyond (Couldry, 2012;

Adeni, 2023). Therefore, positioning Islamic communication as a relevant approach within journalism, broadcasting, and public relations requires an epistemological understanding of communication as an interdisciplinary and evolving field.

Inclusivity in Islamic communication studies can also be observed in its contribution to social transformation. Scholars such as Mowlana (2007), Bakti (2018), and Ibn Khaldun (1967) emphasize the importance of social change through the dissemination of Islamic values. Communication, particularly through media, should be guided by moral imperatives rather than mere commodification. Thus, communication research must not only address information dissemination but also critically engage with social change toward justice and civility.

The implication is that being an Islamic communicator requires not only technical competence but also strong moral and ideological commitment. A Muslim journalist must advocate for justice, a broadcaster must foster dialogue, and a PR practitioner must uphold transparency and fairness.

Ultimately, inclusive communication practices depend on interdisciplinary engagement. Communication research must integrate perspectives from philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and information technology. Through such multidimensional approaches, researchers can develop more critical and reflective understandings of communication realities.

Undergraduate theses should therefore serve as spaces for students to develop critical, contextual, and transformative Islamic communication perspectives—not merely describing how da'wah messages are delivered, but questioning why they matter, how they are received, and what impacts they produce within complex socio-political contexts.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study emphasizes the importance of a dialogical-dialectical approach to Islamic communication, which leads to an inclusive model of Islamic communication. This approach is integrated with the *tabligh-ummah* and divine-human approaches. It is grounded in the reality that communication practices in society cannot always be adequately framed by these two approaches alone. Various communication phenomena require a more open approach.

On this basis, the development of Islamic communication scholarship within the Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI) program—including the concentrations of broadcasting, public relations, and journalism—should be framed through an interconnection between Islamic concepts and general communication concepts. KPI is not solely concerned with issues that are materially and empirically Islamic in nature, but

also with non-Islamic or non-religious issues. Therefore, as a way forward, KPI research requires: (1) integration between general theoretical/conceptual frameworks and Islamic perspectives, and (2) balanced discussion of empirical findings, either between Islamic-issue data and general theories/concepts, or between general-issue data and Islamic theories/concepts, which will result in more open KPI research. Both general and Islamic concepts/theories should remain open to mutual enrichment and complementarity.

Looking ahead, the formulation proposed in this study not only addresses the demands placed on KPI programs to become more open and adaptive, but also contributes to strengthening the epistemological identity of Islamic communication itself. Fundamentally, Islamic communication scholarship must respond to the question of whether it will emerge as an autonomous discipline with its own paradigms, perspectives, approaches, and theories distinct from general communication, or remain part of the broader history of communication studies without being trapped in a dichotomy between the secular and the religious.

Furthermore, the dialogical-dialectical approach opens space for epistemic transformation in the development of Islamic communication. This transformation requires researchers not merely to replicate classical da'wah models, but also to reinterpret contemporary communication dynamics while grounding them in Islamic ethical-normative values.

All efforts to build an open Islamic communication paradigm are rooted in the understanding that Islamic communication is not only important for academic discourse, but also for broader social life. In an increasingly fragmented and polarized world, Islamic communication can function as a bridge for dialogue, a tool for reconciliation, and a means of fostering social cohesion. In the future, Islamic communication should not remain merely an academic label, but should become an ethos for building a peaceful, just, and dignified society. Therefore, it is time for Islamic communication—through KPI programs—to move beyond its comfort zone and emerge as an epistemological alternative that promotes justice, advocacy, and social transformation. In this way, Islamic communication research will not only interpret the world, but also contribute to transforming it.

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