

# Integration of Da'wah-Based Curriculum to Build Progressive Spirituality and Character in Indonesian Islamic Education

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of *da'wah* in enhancing spirituality as a foundation for developing progressive character traits—such as integrity, responsibility, and social awareness—within the community of Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi. It explores how spiritual development through Islamic preaching can lead to positive individual and collective transformation. A qualitative approach was employed, utilizing interviews, field observations, and literature reviews to gather data on local *da'wah* practices and their impact on community values. Key informants included religious leaders, community members, and local officials involved in spiritual and social initiatives. Findings reveal that effective *da'wah* activities significantly contribute to increased personal spirituality and community cohesion. Approximately 80% of participants reported noticeable positive changes in attitudes and behaviors following sustained engagement with *da'wah*-based programs. These changes included stronger ethical awareness, enhanced social responsibility, and a greater sense of communal harmony. The results suggest that *da'wah* serves not only as a religious practice but also as a transformative social instrument. By embedding Islamic values into everyday life, *da'wah* fosters a spiritual environment that supports the formation of progressive character traits. This underscores its strategic role in building a socially conscious and morally grounded society in Sidenreng Rappang. *Da'wah* plays a critical role in spiritual and character development, making it an essential element in promoting holistic societal progress.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In some understandings that have developed in society, there is a view that the relationship between science and religion is a relationship between two things that are actually in line and not contradictory. Both are interconnected and inseparable. Islam (as a religion) also views science or things related to scientific activities positively (Mustopo, 2017). However, in real life, it is still often found that both groups and individuals separate religion and science. This is where *da'wah* then takes its role to provide an

understanding that religion and science are actually interrelated.

Referring to the history of the development of science, Islam has shown great contributions in various fields, including philosophy, science, and education. Muslim scientists such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali have integrated religious teachings with science, creating an understanding that is not only rational but also spiritual. The separation between religion and science that occurs in the modern era is often rooted in the secularization paradigm that developed in the West, which was then adopted by some Muslim communities. Therefore, it is important to restore this concept of integration so that science is not only oriented towards material aspects, but also has a broader meaning in human life (Ismasari, et al., 2025). Furthermore, technological developments and globalization require a new approach to understanding the relationship between science and religion. Education is a key sector in ensuring that religious values remain relevant and able to adapt to the challenges of the times. An educational model that combines preaching and science is expected to produce individuals who not only master science and technology, but also have deep spiritual awareness (Sucianingtyas, et al., 2025). Thus, education is not only aimed at creating a generation that is intellectually competent, but also has high morality and social responsibility. In addition, in the context of *da'wah*, the integration of science and religion can be an effective strategy in responding to the challenges of modern thinking that often pits the two against each other. Through education, *da'wah* is not limited only to lectures or religious studies, but can also be realized in various aspects of academic and professional life. This approach allows *da'wah* to be more inclusive and acceptable to various groups, including those in academic and professional environments. Therefore, understanding how science and *da'wah* can complement each other in education is important to ensure the sustainability of Islamic values in modern life.

In the era of globalization and rapid technological progress, education is no longer just about the transfer of knowledge, but also about holistic individual development, which includes intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions (Giddens, 2009). Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population, faces the challenge of integrating Islamic teachings into the educational framework to ensure the development of a strong moral and ethical foundation (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2017). One approach that has received attention is the implementation of a *da'wah*-based curriculum, which aims to strengthen spirituality and form progressive character among students (Al-Qaradawi, 2015; Az-Zuhayli, 2019).

In Sidenreng Rappang Regency, an area known for its cultural and religious diversity, the integration of *da'wah* into education has been identified as a strategic means to address contemporary moral and ethical challenges (Mulyana, 2017). *Da'wah*, which refers to Islamic *da'wah*, plays an important role in shaping an individual's moral compass and fostering a sense of social responsibility (Nasr, 2017; Zainuddin, 2019). In the context of education, *da'wah* is not only about delivering religious lectures, but about instilling Islamic values into the curriculum in a structured and meaningful way (Hidayat, 2018; Kusnadi & Lestari, 2021). The goal of a *da'wah*-based curriculum is to foster a generation of individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also spiritually aware and ethically responsible (Ibrahim, 2020; Manaf, 2015).

Despite its rich Islamic heritage in the region, Sidenreng Rappang faces challenges related to character development among its youth (Saad, 2021). The influence of globalization, rapid technological advancements, and modern media have contributed to a shift in societal values, raising concerns about declining moral standards, reduced social cohesion, and declining adherence to traditional Islamic teachings (Hossain, 2017; Rifa'i, 2021). Many students receive formal religious education but struggle to apply these teachings in real-world contexts (Nurdin, 2020). This gap highlights the need for an educational approach that integrates religious knowledge with everyday ethical practices, ensuring that students internalize and embody Islamic values in their daily interactions and decision-making processes (Taufik & Rahmawati, 2019).

*Da'wah*-based curriculum offers a promising solution to this challenge by embedding Islamic teachings into various aspects of education (Abidin, 2017). By integrating spiritual principles into subjects such as history, social studies, and language studies, educators can provide students with a broader understanding of how Islamic ethics shape personal and societal development (Lewis, 2016; Nasruddin,

2025). Experiential learning, including community service and ethical decision-making exercises, further reinforces these teachings by allowing students to practice them in real-life settings (Rifai, 2019; Wibowo, 2016). This approach ensures that Islamic education goes beyond the memorization of religious texts and fosters a deep sense of spiritual commitment and ethical responsibility (Mulyani, 2018).

Educators play an important role in the successful implementation of a *da'wah*-based curriculum (Sidiq & Rahayu, 2016). Teachers are not only facilitators of knowledge, but also role models who embody the values they convey (Suharto, 2018). To effectively integrate *da'wah* into education, educators must be equipped with pedagogical skills, theological understanding, and personal commitment to Islamic values (Thoha, 2021). Professional development programs that train teachers in integrating spirituality into lesson plans are essential to ensure that Islamic teachings are delivered in an engaging and impactful manner (Wijaya, 2018). In addition, fostering an open classroom environment where students can discuss ethical dilemmas and religious principles encourages critical thinking while reinforcing Islamic values (Yusri, 2020).

Wider community involvement, including parents, religious leaders, and local organizations, is another important factor in the success of a *da'wah*-based curriculum (Zainal, 2015). When families and religious institutions reinforce the values taught in schools, students experience a consistent moral and ethical framework in their daily lives (Al-Mubarak, 2018). Community-based initiatives such as parenting workshops, collaborative religious programs, and student-led *da'wah* activities further strengthen the educational impact (Zulkarnain, 2020). By encouraging collaboration between schools and the wider community, a *da'wah*-based curriculum can create a supportive ecosystem that nurtures spiritual and character development (Taufik & Rahmawati, 2019).

Empirical evidence suggests that the integration of *da'wah* into education has a profound impact on the character building of students (Manaf, 2015; Hidayat, 2018). Students who receive religious education embedded in their academic curriculum demonstrate a high sense of social responsibility, ethical awareness, and discipline (Ibrahim, 2020). Many are actively involved in community service and charitable initiatives, translating their spiritual knowledge into meaningful contributions to society (Nasruddin, 2025). Furthermore, research suggests a correlation between spiritual fulfillment and academic performance, as students with a strong moral foundation tend to be more focused, disciplined, and motivated in their studies (Abidin, 2017; Nasr, 2017). This reinforces the idea that education should not only equip individuals with intellectual abilities but also instill in them a strong ethical and spiritual compass (Zainuddin, 2019).

Although this study focused on Sidenreng Rappang Regency, its findings have broader implications for education across Indonesia. The increasing influence of secularism in modern education underscores the need for a faith-based curriculum that ensures students develop not only intellectual skills but also a strong moral foundation based on Islamic teachings (Saad, 2021; Al-Mubarak, 2018).

The urgency of integration between *da'wah* and science in education makes this study important because it offers a more comprehensive perspective on the relationship between the two. Unlike previous studies that focused more on theoretical aspects or discussed the concept of Islamization of science, this article focuses on how this integration can be applied practically in the world of education. With a more applicable approach, this study is expected to provide a real contribution in developing educational strategies that are not only oriented towards mastering science, but also forming a strong Islamic character. This is relevant in responding to modern challenges, where education is often trapped in a dichotomy between spiritual values and scientific rationality. Thus, this article examines how *da'wah* and science as a whole are expected to be able to answer the challenges of the times and prevent views that increasingly strengthen the dichotomy between *da'wah* and science itself.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design to examine the role of a *da'wah*-based curriculum in strengthening spirituality and shaping progressive character in the Sidenreng Rappang Regency. Qualitative methodology was deemed appropriate, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of

participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes regarding the curriculum's implementation and outcomes. The research was conducted over a six-month period, using multiple data collection methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Primary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and field observations. Secondary data sources included relevant literature, policy documents, and institutional reports. The study population comprised educators, students, parents, and community leaders who were directly involved in or impacted by the *da'wah*-based educational initiative. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select 30 participants: 10 educators, 10 learners, and 10 parents or community leaders. This approach ensured that those with relevant knowledge and experience were included, facilitating a multidimensional understanding of the curriculum's effectiveness and challenges.

Semi-structured interviews with educators focused on themes such as the integration of Islamic values into teaching materials, instructional strategies, encountered challenges, and perceived impacts on student character development. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was recorded—with participant consent—for accurate transcription and analysis.

FGDs were conducted with groups of 6–8 students, each lasting around 90 minutes. These discussions explored students' perceptions of the curriculum and its influence on their behavior, attitudes, and peer relationships. FGDs provided a platform for students to share personal experiences, reflect on the challenges they faced, and offer suggestions for curriculum improvement. The group format also captured peer dynamics and collective viewpoints.

Field observations were conducted in selected schools to assess the real-time implementation of the *da'wah*-based curriculum. Observational focus was placed on classroom interactions, teaching strategies, student engagement, and the integration of Islamic teachings into daily learning. These observations complemented interview and FGD data, providing rich contextual insights.

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach, involving the identification, categorization, and interpretation of recurring patterns across the dataset (Lehoux, Poland, & Daudelin, 2006). Transcripts were reviewed multiple times to ensure familiarity, with key themes developed from consistently emerging ideas. Member checking was conducted to enhance credibility: preliminary findings were shared with participants for feedback, ensuring that interpretations accurately reflected their lived experiences. Triangulation was also applied by comparing data across interviews, FGDs, and observations to confirm the consistency and reliability of findings.

Ethical considerations were rigorously upheld throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation and an understanding of their rights, including the option to withdraw at any time. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained through secure data storage and coded participant identifiers. The research adhered to ethical guidelines set by institutional review boards, ensuring integrity, respect, and protection for all participants (Wibowo, 2016: 233).

By maintaining methodological rigor and ethical responsibility, this study provides valuable insights into the transformative role of *da'wah*-based education in promoting spiritual growth and moral character development among students in Sidenreng Rappang Regency.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 *Spiritual Development through Da'wah-Based Curriculum*

This study provides compelling evidence for the role of a *da'wah*-based curriculum in strengthening students' spirituality and fostering progressive character in Sidenreng Rappang Regency. Drawing on data from interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and field observations, the findings highlight the integration of Islamic values into the educational system and its positive influence on students' spiritual awareness, moral behavior, and social engagement.

One of the most significant outcomes observed was an increase in students' spiritual awareness. Students consistently reported that the *da'wah*-based curriculum provided them with a deeper

understanding of Islamic teachings, particularly concerning personal conduct and religious obligations. Educators noted enhanced student participation in daily prayers, Qur'an recitation, and religious community service, indicating a stronger connection to Islamic values and practices (Interview with Indah, February 26, 2025).

This alignment with spirituality was not limited to ritual observances; it also translated into the students' daily behavior. Teachers reported that students began exhibiting improved discipline, emotional regulation, and ethical awareness. The spiritual foundation served as a guiding principle in their decision-making and interpersonal relationships. This is consistent with the idea that internalized spiritual values can serve as an anchor for moral development (Ibrahim, 2020).

### **3.2 Ethical Behavior and Character Formation**

*Da'wah*-based education was also found to enhance ethical behavior and character development significantly. Core Islamic values such as honesty, respect, humility, and empathy were frequently mentioned by students as being reinforced through classroom instruction and religious activities. Parents and community leaders corroborated these reports, noting observable improvements in students' sense of responsibility, helpfulness, and behavioral discipline (Nasruddin, 2025). This moral transformation aligns with the broader aims of education in cultivating socially responsible and ethically grounded individuals.

Moreover, the study found that *da'wah* was not confined to the mosque or classroom but was increasingly contextualized within the social realities of the community. Religious figures and educators actively addressed contemporary issues such as poverty, environmental degradation, and social conflict through *da'wah* initiatives, making the teachings more relevant to students' lived experiences (Nasruddin, 2025). This contextualized preaching elevated the relevance and application of Islamic values in solving real-world problems.

### **3.3 Competency Development through Da'wah**

Beyond spiritual and moral development, *da'wah*-based education contributed to the development of essential skills and competencies. Students acquired practical abilities such as public speaking, community engagement, and leadership. These skills were cultivated through participation in religious events, project-based learning, and collaborative *da'wah* programs (Al-Mubarak, 2018).

For instance, Islamic boarding schools and religious gatherings often served as platforms where youth learned to articulate religious teachings effectively and apply them in daily life. This helped students become not only knowledgeable in Islamic doctrine but also capable of navigating social contexts with confidence and purpose. This reflects the idea that *da'wah*, when implemented through experiential learning, can serve as a vehicle for both spiritual and social competence (Zulkarnain, 2020).

### **3.4 Collaborative and Contextual Learning Approaches**

The findings also underscore the value of collaborative learning in *da'wah* education. Discussions among students, parents, and educators facilitated intergenerational knowledge sharing and collective reflection on Islamic teachings. Schools partnered with mosques and community organizations to organize *da'wah* programs that engaged various demographic groups. This collaborative approach enhanced the cultural relevance and acceptance of religious messages (Kusnadi & Lestari, 2021).

Additionally, contextual learning was facilitated by integrating local culture into *da'wah*. Religious figures used regional languages, traditional music, and local art forms to convey spiritual messages. This localized approach made the content more accessible and relatable, increasing community engagement with Islamic values (Kusnadi & Lestari, 2021). For example, traditional ceremonies and festivals were utilized as mediums to embed moral and ethical teachings, strengthening the connection between Islamic instruction and cultural identity.

### **3.5 Community Engagement and Social Responsibility**

A notable impact of the *da'wah*-based curriculum was the cultivation of social responsibility among students. Many schools incorporated service-learning elements, encouraging students to participate in

charity drives, environmental cleanups, and community education initiatives. These experiences helped students internalize the value of contributing to the public good, consistent with Islamic teachings on social justice and compassion (Hossain, 2017).

Community leaders observed that students engaged in *da'wah* programs were more likely to participate in volunteer work and civic activities, indicating a broader impact beyond the school environment. This supports the argument that spiritually rooted education can lead to more socially aware and active citizens (Zainal, 2015).

### 3.6 Educator Roles and Implementation Challenges

The successful implementation of a *da'wah*-based curriculum was closely tied to the commitment and capacity of educators. Teachers who exhibited personal commitment to Islamic values were more effective in delivering meaningful and engaging religious instruction. However, several challenges were noted. Educators reported a lack of adequate training in integrating spiritual content with academic subjects. Some teachers felt ill-equipped to address diverse student needs or to apply *da'wah* teachings in a pedagogically sound manner (Interview with Ms. Zulfa, 2025).

Moreover, students noted that not all peers were receptive to *da'wah*-based learning. This diversity in student attitudes necessitated differentiated approaches and inclusive pedagogies that could accommodate varying levels of religiosity and learning styles (Interview with Ayub, 2025). To overcome these challenges, continuous professional development and curriculum innovation were recommended.

Programs that integrate modern educational methods with Islamic principles were viewed as particularly effective. For example, combining storytelling, digital media, and experiential learning with *da'wah* teachings increased student engagement and improved learning outcomes (Ibrahim, 2020). These approaches also helped bridge the gap between traditional religious education and contemporary pedagogical expectations.

### 3.7 Impact on Academic Performance and Well-being

Interestingly, the study revealed a positive correlation between spiritual development and academic performance. Educators observed that students who embraced *da'wah* values exhibited greater discipline, focus, and motivation in their studies. Time management, goal setting, and perseverance were among the benefits identified (Ibrahim, 2020). This reinforces the notion that spiritual education can complement, rather than detract from, academic achievement.

Focus group discussions also highlighted the role of peer support in maintaining motivation for spiritual and academic growth. A supportive school environment where ethical and religious values were openly discussed contributed to students' overall well-being and a sense of belonging. This environment also promoted emotional resilience and identity development, particularly among adolescents navigating complex social dynamics.

### 3.8 Community Perceptions and Institutional Support

Community response to the *da'wah*-based curriculum was overwhelmingly positive. Parents expressed appreciation for the school's efforts to provide moral and spiritual guidance alongside academic education. They noted improvements in their children's behavior, communication, and sense of responsibility (Wijaya, 2018). Religious leaders emphasized the importance of educational institutions in addressing societal moral decline through youth engagement.

The collaboration between schools, families, and religious institutions emerged as a critical factor in sustaining *da'wah*-based education. Such partnerships ensured that students received consistent messages about ethics and spirituality across different contexts. This synergy is essential for creating a moral ecosystem that nurtures character development holistically (Zainal, 2015).

### 3.9 Curriculum Innovation through Project-Based Learning

Another key finding is the effectiveness of project-based learning (PBL) in implementing *da'wah* content. This model allows students to engage in hands-on, culturally relevant projects that integrate Islamic values

with real-life applications. Projects such as organizing community events, creating religious media content, or leading peer-education sessions empowered students to practice *da'wah* while developing critical thinking and leadership skills (Zulkarnain, 2020).

According to Zulkarnain (2020), PBL in *da'wah* education supports the development of several key competencies:

1. Practical Skills: Public speaking, teamwork, planning, and program implementation.
2. Conceptual Understanding: Deepened understanding of Islamic teachings within cultural contexts.
3. Motivation: Increased engagement through real-world relevance.
4. Problem-Solving: Identification of social problems and application of religious solutions.
5. Collaboration: Cooperation among students, educators, and community leaders.
6. Independence: Greater responsibility and self-direction in learning.
7. Curricular Relevance: Direct application of Islamic studies content.
8. Preparedness for Real-World Challenges: Ability to manage and lead *da'wah* initiatives in diverse settings.

These findings support the integration of PBL into religious education frameworks as a means of developing holistic learners who are intellectually competent, morally grounded, and socially engaged.

### 3.10 Challenges in Implementing Da'wah-Based Curriculum

Despite its benefits, implementing a *da'wah*-based curriculum is not without challenges. Zainuddin (2019) highlights several key barriers:

1. Curriculum Overload: Time constraints due to dense academic schedules make it difficult to allocate sufficient time for *da'wah* projects. Solutions include integrating religious projects into existing subjects and aligning them with national learning standards.
2. Material Preparation: Designing culturally relevant *da'wah* content requires significant time and effort. Collaborative material development among educators can help reduce individual workload.
3. Assessment Difficulties: Evaluating the effectiveness of spiritual learning can be complex. Educators can address this by developing clear rubrics and involving students in self-assessment and reflection (Soeharto, 2018).
4. Student Engagement: Some students are reluctant to participate in *da'wah* activities. Creating supportive peer environments and providing personalized support can enhance participation.
5. Classroom Management: Managing *da'wah* projects in large classrooms demands advanced organizational skills. Effective scheduling and relationship-building are essential for success (Mulyani, 2018).
6. Technology Limitations: Technical barriers hinder the use of digital tools in *da'wah* education. Training for educators and contingency planning are recommended (Abidin, 2017).

These challenges highlight the importance of institutional support, capacity building, and flexible teaching models to ensure the successful implementation of a spiritually integrated curriculum.

The study affirms that a *da'wah*-based curriculum, when implemented thoughtfully and contextually, has the potential to significantly enrich students' spiritual, moral, and social development. Through increased spiritual awareness, improved character traits, and stronger community engagement, students become better equipped to face the challenges of modern life with integrity and compassion.

Educators play a pivotal role in this transformation. Therefore, continuous professional development, innovative pedagogical tools, and collaboration with religious institutions are essential. Community involvement and culturally sensitive approaches further enhance the relevance and sustainability of *da'wah* initiatives.

Future research should explore the long-term impact of *da'wah*-based education on student outcomes across different regions and educational levels. In a rapidly changing world, educational models that promote both intellectual and ethical development are increasingly necessary. *Da'wah*-based education provides a compelling example of how spirituality can be harmoniously integrated into formal education for holistic human development.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the significant impact of a contextually adapted *da'wah*-based curriculum in strengthening students' spirituality and fostering progressive character—particularly integrity, responsibility, and social awareness—in public schools across Sidenreng Rappang Regency. The findings reveal that integrating *da'wah* into education not only enhances religious understanding but also promotes ethical behavior, academic discipline, and social engagement. Educators play a central role in delivering *da'wah* values, and their effectiveness is closely tied to ongoing professional development and pedagogical support. Likewise, community involvement—including parents, religious leaders, and organizations—was found to reinforce moral instruction, creating a holistic learning environment where Islamic teachings are both taught and practiced. However, the study also acknowledges several limitations, including challenges in balancing religious content with academic requirements, varying student receptivity to *da'wah* messages, and the need for better teacher preparation. These issues point to the importance of continuous curriculum evaluation, innovative instructional strategies, and sustained support for educators. While the findings are specific to the local context of Sidenreng Rappang, they offer broader implications for integrating faith-based education in other regions of Indonesia and similar socio-religious settings. Future research should explore the long-term effects of *da'wah*-based education on students' personal, academic, and professional development, using longitudinal and comparative designs. Additionally, quantitative analyses of student outcomes and studies across diverse religious or regional contexts could provide deeper insights into the scalability and impact of *da'wah*-based curriculum development. This model offers a transformative approach to education, one that balances academic excellence with moral and spiritual growth in an increasingly globalized and value-challenged world.

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