

The Integration of Preachers' Leadership Competencies in Empowering Preachers for the Orang Asli Community in Malaysia

Azim Rahim^{*}, Abd Ghafar Don, Zulkefli Aini

Centre for Da'wah and Leadership Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, University Kebangsaan Malaysia

^{*}Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

Islamic da'wah is a universal trust that aims to invite humanity towards devotion to Allah SWT through diverse and wise approaches. The *da'i* (preacher) is an individual entrusted with the responsibility of conveying the message of Islam with correct understanding and the ability to lead society, particularly the Orang Asli community. The question arises as to what competency constructs are required for a *da'i* to effectively assume a leadership role among the Orang Asli. In this regard, the present study aims to identify the forms of leadership competencies that need to be instilled among *da'wah* practitioners working with the Orang Asli in Malaysia. This study employs a qualitative approach using a content analysis design of previous studies, journal articles, and scholarly works related to the subject. Data were thematically analyzed according to the objectives of the study. The findings indicate that the integration of *da'i* competencies should encompass knowledge, personal preparedness, diverse skills, and attitudes. The implications of this study suggest that comprehensive mastery of competencies not only strengthens *da'wah* leadership among the Orang Asli but also has the potential to establish an inclusive model of *da'wah* leadership that can be applied to other minority communities in Malaysia.

Keywords: Da'wah, Da'i Leadership, Competency Constructs of Preachers, Orang Asli Community.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic da'wah is a comprehensive trust that transcends the boundaries of race, culture, and geography. In the Malaysian context, da'wah efforts towards the Orang Asli community represent an important responsibility that should not be neglected, as they are part of a minority group with unique socio-cultural backgrounds, belief systems and traditions. This uniqueness demands an inclusive and wise approach to da'wah, tailored to the realities of local life. Accordingly, preachers who work closely with this community must not only be equipped with religious knowledge but are also required to possess comprehensive da'wah competencies, including mastery of knowledge, communication skills, understanding of local culture and leadership elements that can guide the community towards a true understanding of Islam.

The leadership of preachers in this context plays a crucial role in conveying the message of Islam and acting as agents of social change who guide the Orang Asli community towards spiritual development, moral integrity, and overall well-being. Nevertheless, various challenges remain, including cultural differences, educational levels, and socio-economic issues, which necessitate more focused and integrated da'wah strategies. Therefore, the development of a preacher leadership model based on competencies such as knowledge, self-preparedness, skills and attitude is essential as a foundation for strengthening the da'wah movement. This article discusses the integration of these competencies in empowering the role of preachers among the Orang Asli community in Malaysia, thereby establishing a more inclusive and sustainable model of da'wah leadership.

Preachers' Leadership

Leadership is a key factor in determining the continuity and effectiveness of a community or movement. According to Lussier and Achua (2022), leadership encompasses five main dimensions: influence, achievement of organizational objectives, the relationship between leaders and followers, change management and interaction

with the wider community. This definition indicates that leadership is not merely tied to formal authority but functions as a dynamic process requiring wisdom, communication skills and the ability to influence people towards a certain goal. From the Islamic perspective, leadership is a trust carried by human beings as the vicegerents (khalifah) of Allah SWT on earth, with the responsibility of guiding the ummah towards truth and well-being in both this world and the hereafter (al-Azami, 2024).

Within the framework of Islamic da'wah, preachers are not only limited to being conveyors of messages but also bear a significant responsibility as spiritual leaders and catalysts for societal change. According to Abdul Karim Zaidan (2002), the main duty of a preacher is to deliver the teachings of Islam clearly and to guide people towards a transformation rooted in values of goodness. This responsibility, granted by Allah SWT, demands determination, sincerity, and full commitment (Nik Siti Khadijah, 2015). Therefore, the da'wah approach cannot be static; rather, it must be adapted to cultural backgrounds, levels of understanding, and the needs of the mad'u. This statement aligns with the view of Ab. Aziz (1997), who emphasized that preachers play a role in inviting people to Islam through methods that are wise and well-directed.

Da'wah Among the Orang Asli Community in Malaysia

The Orang Asli community in Malaysia constitutes a unique ethnic group with its own distinct lifestyle and socio-cultural characteristics. This uniqueness encompasses aspects such as the definition of Orang Asli identity, sub-ethnic divisions, patterns of population and settlement, traditional beliefs, customary practices, economic conditions and income levels, education systems, community leadership and public health. According to official data from the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) in 2023, a total of 209,575 Orang Asli reside in Peninsular Malaysia. The state with the highest number is Pahang, with 78,615 people, followed by Perak with 61,225, and Selangor with 20,961. The state with the lowest population is Kedah, with only 336 individuals. Based on ethnic distribution data of the Orang Asli (JAKOA, 2024), the Senoi group records the highest number at 120,240, followed by the Proto-Malay with 93,702 people, while the Negrito is the smallest group with only 7,156. This official data demonstrates that the settlement patterns of the Orang Asli vary according to their location and sub-ethnic groups, indicating the need for appropriate da'wah strategies and approaches tailored to them.

The history of Islamic da'wah among the Orang Asli shows an interesting development, dating back to before the country's independence. Abdul Ghafar Don (1999) explains that da'wah activities existed even before the Second World War. For example, in the state of Perak in 1933, Lebai Salim bin Mohd. Dawi, who held the position of Naib Kadi, carried out da'wah efforts and succeeded in converting around 100 Orang Asli in Kampung Degong, Teluk Intan (Halimin, 1993). Meanwhile, in the state of Terengganu, Padzal (1997) found that the village head of Basung, Tun Pandak bin Tun Omar, succeeded in converting an Orang Asli individual from the Bateq tribe, named Abdullah bin Abdul Rahman, around the 1940s. This history shows that da'wah among the Orang Asli began long ago and has continued consistently to this day.

However, da'wah implementation before independence was informal and carried out individually. After independence, da'wah approaches towards the Orang Asli began to take shape through formal institutions and specific organizations. Several religious departments as well as non-governmental da'wah organizations began to focus on this effort. Among the earliest to implement this approach was the Perak State Islamic Religious Department in 1964, which studied suitable da'wah methodologies for the Orang Asli and appointed several missionary officers for that purpose (Halimin, 1993). At present, da'wah to the Orang Asli is conducted by both government da'wah bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Government da'wah agencies operate on two levels: at the federal level, it is carried out by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), while at the state level, it is implemented by the State Islamic Religious Councils or Departments. To ensure that da'wah is carried out effectively and in a coordinated manner, government da'wah agencies have established synergies with NGOs from time to time.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using a content analysis design of previous research, journal articles, and earlier scholarly works relevant to the subject matter. For data collection purposes, journal articles, theses,

books, and documents related to the elements of preacher leadership competencies were examined. These secondary data were thematically analyzed by developing themes aligned with the objectives of the study. To strengthen the research data, the Fuzzy Delphi method was also utilized to obtain expert consensus and validation regarding the constructs of preacher leadership competencies among the Indigenous (Orang Asli) community. For this purpose, a total of 18 experts were selected as the study sample, comprising academicians, officers from the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and experienced preachers from JAKIM who are actively involved in Indigenous missionary work. The defuzzification process was conducted during the data analysis phase of the Fuzzy Delphi Technique. This process serves to determine the ranking or priority of each item, as well as to establish the order of importance among the variables and sub-variables.

FINDINGS

Preacher Competency

The term *competency* originates from the Latin word *competentia*, which means “the right to judge” or “the authority to express an opinion” (Caupin Gilles, 2006). Discussion of this concept began to develop in the field of psychology in the early 20th century when scholars examined the relationship between individual ability and work performance. David McClelland was a prominent figure who pioneered this idea through a human resource management approach, emphasizing that competency is fundamental in evaluating and enhancing worker effectiveness. According to Caupin Gilles (2006), competency encompasses a combination of knowledge, skills, experience and personality that can produce excellent performance in life and career.

This view was further elaborated by other scholars in different contexts. McClelland (1973) defined competency as a performance determinant that can be identified through psychological traits and positive behavior. Boyatzis (1982) described it as a basic characteristic closely linked to success in completing tasks, while Kathe Schneider (2019) regarded it as the ability and skill required to perform a task effectively. Eraut (1998) added that competency is not only related to technical skills but also involves the execution of tasks based on professional standards. This perspective aligns with Short’s (1985) argument that competency is a form of personal quality measurable through an individual’s level of knowledge and skills.

From another perspective, competency is also considered a fundamental trait that drives high performance in work (Klemp, 1980; Spencer, 2003). This portrays competency as a set of skills and abilities that can be honed through experience and continuous training, thereby improving the quality of individual task performance. Within the framework of da’wah, competency is seen as an essential requirement for enhancing the quality of preachers. Ayuni Nazuha (2023) emphasized that strong competency plays a role in producing credible preachers and delivering effective da’wah. Through a review of the literature, four competency constructs were identified as the foundation for da’wah among the Orang Asli, namely knowledge, self preparedness, skills, and attitude. Accordingly, Table 1 explains the competency constructs of preachers in the context of da’wah to the Orang Asli community.

Table 1: Constructs of Preachers’ Leadership Competencies in the Context of Da’wah to the Orang Asli Community in Malaysia

Competency	Dimension	Significance
Knowledge Competency	Knowledge of the Qur’an and al-Sunnah	Enables preachers to convey Islamic teachings with authentic and authoritative arguments.
	Knowledge of Fardu ‘Ain and Fard Kifayah	Ensures that da’wah understanding is aligned with knowledge and the needs of the Indigenous community.
	Knowledge of the Sociocultural Aspects of the Indigenous (Orang Asli) Community	Prevents the occurrence of misunderstandings or inconsistencies in the delivery of Islamic messages.
Self-Preparation Competency	Preparedness in carrying out tasks Spiritual preparation Mental preparation	Enhances the preacher’s resilience in facing psychological and social challenges in the field.

	Emotional preparation	Ensures that preachers are holistically prepared in aspects of knowledge, spirituality, and emotional strength. Shapes preachers to be patient, resilient, and disciplined when interacting with the Indigenous community.
Skills Competency	Management skills Communication skills Psychological skills in Relevant fields Skills other	Enables preachers to manage da'wah activities in an organized and strategic manner. Cultivates effective communication skills so that the Islamic message can be conveyed and accepted more easily. Provides the ability to understand the background, emotions, and psychology of the audience for a more wise and empathetic approach.
Attitude Competency		Shapes preachers as role models who are respected and trusted by the community. Ensures steadfastness (istiqamah) and high commitment in the effort to strengthen da'wah among the Indigenous community.

Integration of Preachers' Competencies towards the Orang Asli Community

The integration of preachers' competencies in the context of the Orang Asli community is seen as a crucial aspect to ensure that the message of Islam can be conveyed effectively and meaningfully. The diversity of cultures, beliefs and unique lifestyles demands a more comprehensive da'wah approach that is sensitive to local realities. Therefore, preachers must combine the strength of religious knowledge with an understanding of the sociocultural background of the target community so that da'wah is neither perceived as foreign nor difficult to accept. This integration encompasses not only knowledge but also self-preparedness, skills across various fields and attitudes that are capable of building trust and respect from the Orang Asli community.

The effectiveness of this integration positions preachers not merely as conveyors of the Islamic message but also as leaders who guide the community towards positive transformation. The integration of preachers' competencies establishes a form of da'wah that is more practical, relevant and closely aligned with the needs of the target community. Such an approach will help strengthen the understanding of Islam, improve community relations and ensure that da'wah is carried out with wisdom and effectiveness.

This study employed the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) by utilizing field data collected from 18 experts comprising academicians, officers from the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and experienced preachers from JAKIM who have extensive involvement in Indigenous (Orang Asli) missionary work. The appointed experts were recognized authorities in their respective fields, each possessing more than five years of relevant professional experience. The opinions and consensus of these experts were obtained to integrate the theory of *dakwah* (Islamic missionary) leadership with its practical applicability in the field. The findings revealed that all four leadership competency constructs (1) Knowledge Competency, (2) Self-Preparation Competency, (3) Skills Competency and (4) Attitude Competency were well-received and validated by the panel of experts. According to the principles of the Fuzzy Delphi Method, if the *d*-value ≤ 0.2 , it indicates that all experts have reached consensus regarding the specific item. Conversely, if the *d*-value exceeds 0.2, a second round of evaluation is required to determine whether the item should be retained or eliminated (Chen, 2000: 1–9; Cheng & Lin, 2002: 174–186). The Fuzzy Delphi Technique also assesses whether the level of expert agreement for each construct or item meets or exceeds 75%. An item is considered to have achieved expert consensus if the percentage of agreement equals or surpasses 75% (Chu & Hwang, 2008; Murray & Hammons, 1995).

The analysis found that all defuzzification values (Alpha-Cut or average of fuzzy responses) exceeded 0.5, indicating that all items under the Knowledge Competency construct were accepted by the experts. Similarly, all items under the Self-Preparation Competency construct also achieved Alpha-Cut values above 0.5, confirming

expert agreement. The Fuzzy Delphi analysis further demonstrated that all items possessed a threshold (d) value ≤ 0.2 , signifying expert consensus on the Skills Competency construct. The expert agreement percentage reached 91%, surpassing the 75% threshold, thereby affirming that all items within the Skills Competency construct attained expert consensus. Overall, the defuzzification Alpha-Cut values for all items under the Attitude Competency construct were above 0.5, demonstrating that the entire set of items was accepted by the panel of experts. These results confirm that all four leadership competency constructs have been validated through a strong and consistent expert consensus.

Knowledge Competency

Knowledge is the most fundamental foundation in human life and civilization, particularly for Muslims. Its importance corresponds with the early history of Islam, when the first revelation sent down to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was related to knowledge, namely the word “*iqra*” in Surah al-‘Alaq, verse one, which means “*Read*.” The revelation of this first command demonstrates that every deed in life must be based on knowledge, especially for an Islamic preacher (Faiz & Zulkefli Aini, 2017). Mastery of knowledge is no longer optional but a basic necessity. The importance of knowledge is also emphasized in the words of Allah SWT in Surah Muhammad, verse 19:

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْبِكَ

Translation: “So know (O Prophet) that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah SWT and seek forgiveness for your sins.”

According to al-Qurtubi (2013) in his *tafsir*, the verse indicates that the true priority of knowledge is to recognize the Oneness of Allah SWT and it encourages humankind to continuously know Allah so that knowledge and faith proceed hand in hand, grounded upon the evidence of His creations. From the perspective of the preacher, Faiz & Zulkefli Aini (2017) affirm that a knowledgeable preacher has the potential to spread noble values in the course of da‘wah activities. This is because the strength of a preacher depends on the quality of his knowledge in facing various circumstances and situations.

a. Knowledge of the Qur’an and the Sunnah

A competent preacher must possess knowledge and mastery of the Qur’an, including proficiency in proper recitation and strong memorization. Furthermore, he must be capable of teaching the Orang Asli community using appropriate methods and approaches. Such competency not only enhances the preacher’s credibility but also establishes him as a trusted source of reference within the community. Eloquence in delivering knowledge and wisdom in approach will earn the preacher respect and a place in the hearts of the people he serves, including the Orang Asli.

Mastery of Qur’anic knowledge is a fundamental basis for every preacher. A preacher equipped with knowledge and da‘wah skills can enhance the effectiveness of conveying the message of Islam, particularly to communities requiring special approaches such as the Orang Asli. One of the methods that can be applied by the preacher is to act as the imam during congregational prayers within the community. Therefore, a preacher must be able to recite the Qur’an correctly and accurately in accordance with the rules of *tajwīd* (Zetty Nurzuliana et al., 2016). According to the study by Ismail Naim & Abdul Ghafar Don (2019), proper recitation can serve as a guide for listeners and indirectly, as a learning process for the congregation. This condition also helps correct the recitation of *al-Fātiḥah*, which is one of the pillars of prayer and is obligatory to be recited (Razaleigh, 2014).

In addition, mastery of knowledge of the Sunnah is also a vital aspect in shaping a comprehensive understanding of Islam, particularly for preachers. The Sunnah refers to one form of divine revelation from Allah SWT, the meaning and content of which were expressed by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (Aminudin et al., 2006). The Sunnah also embodies principles of perfection, balance and ease, which serve as an essential foundation in life and in da‘wah delivery (Zetty Nurzuliana et al., 2016). These three principles form a primary basis for human life in conducting daily affairs. A sound and profound understanding of both the Qur’an and the Sunnah enables da‘wah to be carried out accurately, wisely and in harmony with human nature.

b. Knowledge of Fardu ‘Ain and Fardu Kifayah

Fardu ‘Ain knowledge encompasses branches of learning such as theology (*tauhid*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), ethics (*akhlak*) and worship (*ibadah*), all of which play a role in shaping a Muslim personality that is balanced in terms of faith (*‘aqidah*), law (*shari‘ah*) and morality (*akhlak*). As emphasized by Kamaruzzaman & Mohd Omar (2021), Islam is a religion that strengthens da‘wah, knowledge, spirituality and ethics with the aim of producing balanced individuals and societies for the building of civilizational well-being. This is because the process of changing attitudes requires knowledge whose truth is firmly believed, so that it can touch both the heart and intellect, ultimately transforming one’s way of life (Al-Maududi, 1987). Thus, it is essential for preachers to be competent in religious knowledge so that they can play an important role in spreading the message of Islam with wisdom and a high sense of awareness.

Furthermore, *Fardu Kifayah* knowledge is also considered important in assisting preachers to manage and plan strategies in da‘wah so that the process is always in a proper and orderly manner (Faiz & Zulkefli Aini, 2017). For example, this includes organizing schedules and curricula more systematically and applying practical approaches to areas of knowledge that require practice, such as prayer, purification and others. Therefore, it is necessary for preachers to prioritize this aspect in order to become competent leaders capable of managing their *mad‘u*.

c. Knowledge of the Socio-Cultural Aspects of the Orang Asli

Preachers must possess a deep understanding of the socio-cultural aspects of the Orang Asli community, as this forms an essential basis for effectively approaching and interacting with them. As emphasized by Abd Karim Zaydan (2000), understanding the background of the target group is a strategic approach in achieving more effective and sustainable da‘wah outcomes. This assertion highlights that knowledge of the lifestyle patterns, belief systems, and social structures of the Orang Asli is a vital foundation for preachers to become more sensitive to the background and cultural values practiced by the community.

This is because the Orang Asli are a unique ethnic group within Malaysia’s plural society, possessing customary systems, cultures and beliefs inherited from their ancestors over generations (Nafisiah, 2001). Hence, it is crucial for preachers to master knowledge related to the socio-cultural aspects of the Orang Asli in order to be better prepared to address the challenges of da‘wah delivery more effectively within this community. In addition to understanding the socio-cultural context of the Orang Asli, preachers must also take into account the current background and circumstances of the target community so that the strategies and approaches of da‘wah implemented are more rational and contextual (Mahmood Zuhdi, 2006). Therefore, a profound understanding of the socio-cultural aspects of the Orang Asli becomes a prerequisite for the effectiveness of da‘wah efforts.

Self-Preparedness Competency

Self-preparedness is a core element that underpins the ability and efficiency of a preacher in carrying out da‘wah duties when dealing with *mad‘u* from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. The aspects of preparedness that require attention encompass the spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical dimensions, all of which are interrelated in shaping the integrity of a credible preacher (Ayuni Nazuha, 2023). This competency should serve as a guiding principle for preachers before entering the field of da‘wah, ensuring that they are well-prepared in their delivery. In the context of da‘wah among the Orang Asli, such preparedness becomes even more significant, as preachers will encounter a community with distinct cultural backgrounds, customs and belief systems. Therefore, preachers must prepare themselves by understanding the local culture, physical and mental demands and by adopting a more prudent and wise approach in their delivery. All these aspects must be given focused attention including the spiritual, emotional, mental and personal dimensions so that preachers remain in a state of readiness when engaging with their *mad‘u*.

Preparedness in Carrying Out Duties

Da‘wah is a trust from Allah SWT, accompanied by challenges and trials that demand steadfastness and patience from preachers. Burhanuddin Jalal et al. (2018) emphasize that effective da‘wah among the Orang Asli requires a comprehensive understanding of the concept of da‘wah itself. Without such understanding, preachers may

become rigid, repetitive in their content and fail to address the real needs of the target community effectively. Abdul Ghafar Don et al. (2019) state that preparedness begins when preachers understand the entrusted task and develop a deep interest in the field of da'wah. Such interest, rooted in love for Islam, produces a higher quality approach that touches hearts.

Spiritual Preparedness

Spiritual preparedness is the cornerstone of every preacher, as inner strength grounded in faith (*īmān*) and piety (*taqwā*) determines the effectiveness of delivering the message of Islam. Zulkefli Aini and Izzatul Husna (2022) stress that preachers must maintain a strong relationship with Allah SWT through consistent and sincere acts of worship, which instill confidence and absolute reliance upon Him. Kamarul Azmi (2016) further explains that spiritual development is a core component that must be prioritized in building a preacher's integrity. This development is best achieved by emulating the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who emphasized spiritual strength in preparing himself for da'wah. Hence, preachers must take the Prophet's character as a model, especially when approaching groups at the early stages of religious acceptance.

Mental Preparedness

Mental preparedness refers to intellectual strength and the ability to think clearly toward well-defined and strategic goals. In the context of Islamic da'wah, especially among communities unaccustomed to Islam such as the Orang Asli, this aspect is vital since every da'wah action must be planned and executed with wisdom and careful consideration. Preachers must be able to think critically and adapt their approaches according to the background, needs, and sensitivities of the target audience. Abdurrahman (2019) affirms that preachers will face diverse audiences with differing customs, traditions, levels of education, and thought patterns. Beyond this diversity, preachers also encounter obstacles such as social barriers, rejection, provocation and even potential physical threats. Thus, strong mental preparedness is essential to ensure da'wah effectiveness in various situations.

Emotional Preparedness

Emotional preparedness is a critical element in shaping the preacher's ability to carry out responsibilities, especially among the Orang Asli. Emotions refer to internal feelings such as joy, anger, sadness and disappointment, which, if not managed well, can affect the preacher's ability to handle the challenges of da'wah. Fariza Md Sham (2015) explains that emotional pressure is among the major challenges faced by preachers, particularly when they must live far from their familiar environment to fulfill their da'wah mission. For those serving in rural or remote areas, emotional strain can arise from various factors, including separation from family and the demands of high commitment toward the target community. Thus, the ability to control and manage emotions not only helps preachers remain calm under pressure but also strengthens resilience and integrity in fulfilling their roles effectively.

Skills Competency

Skills competency is a crucial element in shaping the ability and effectiveness of a preacher when carrying out da'wah among *mad'u* from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. The term "*skill*" encompasses proficiency, intelligence, agility, expertise, and a high level of capability in a given field (al-Ba'labaki, 2003). According to Zulkefli Aini et al. (2018), a wise preacher does not merely convey the content of da'wah but is also able to apply techniques and styles of delivery that suit the background of the *mad'u*, thereby enhancing its impact. Hence, a competent preacher must possess skills in areas such as management, communication, and psychology.

In the context of da'wah among the Orang Asli community, skills form a vital aspect that must be given serious attention in efforts to engage a society that differs in lifestyle, religion and culture. This is because the uniqueness of the community's culture and norms requires preachers who can adapt their da'wah approaches in a manner more effective and relevant to the community (Ayuni Nazuha, 2023). This indicates that skills serve as an important indicator of a preacher's competency, reflected in how effectively they are able to understand the culture, adapt themselves and apply their skills in engaging the target audience across various situations.

Management Skills

In the organizational context of da'wah, management entails its own forms and characteristics in the execution of da'wah activities. According to Mohamad Nazli (2016), essential features of organizational da'wah management involve action through four processes: planning, organizing, leadership and control or accountability in da'wah. These characteristics are also highlighted by Berhanundin Abdullah (2007), who stated that elements that must be managed to ensure da'wah efforts achieve their objectives effectively include decision-making, planning, leadership, organizing, motivation, communication and coordination. Within the context of da'wah to the Orang Asli community, such structured management is crucial to enable preachers to adapt their approaches to the cultural realities and needs of the community, thereby ensuring that the message of Islam is conveyed systematically and effectively.

Communication Skills

Communication is a core element in the effectiveness of da'wah, as it serves as the primary medium for building strong relationships between preachers and *mad'u*. This skill is not limited to verbal aspects but also includes the selection of language that is simple and suitable for the target audience's level of understanding. The ability to choose effective communication strategies must be cultivated in every preacher, particularly through interpersonal skills involving two-way communication. According to Raudhah (2017), interpersonal communication is a form of interaction commonly used to fulfill human social needs. Zulkefli Aini (2020) found that preachers proficient in interpersonal communication can deliver messages more clearly and effectively, especially when they use Malay language complemented with some Orang Asli words. This approach not only reflects appreciation of the community's identity but also builds trust and facilitates a clearer understanding of the da'wah message being conveyed.

Psychological Skills

Psychological skills are an important aspect that must be strategically integrated into the implementation of da'wah, as they reinforce the effectiveness of various approaches used by preachers. Mastery of this aspect enables preachers to understand the emotional and mental inclinations of the *mad'u* and to influence their receptiveness toward the Islamic message (Ayuni Nazuha, 2023). H.M. Arifin (1977) defines the psychology of da'wah as a branch of knowledge that systematically studies the human psyche within the da'wah process, encompassing both the preacher and the target audience. This approach is not foreign to Islamic tradition, as emphasized by Jamaluddin Kafie (1993), who noted that da'wah psychology is part of the da'wah methodology, combining psychological insights with da'wah principles. In the context of the Orang Asli community, the application of psychological skills can help preachers to understand the cultural sensitivities and emotional background of the community, thereby facilitating their gradual approach to Islam with wisdom and empathy.

Attitude Competency

Attitude is a crucial element that influences the effectiveness of preachers in conveying the message of Islam, particularly to the Orang Asli community who are newly introduced to the religion. According to Faisal and Nabil Ahmad (2020), attitude refers to an individual's consistent behavioral tendencies toward certain situations, which ultimately shape the *mad'u*'s perception of Islam. The study by Nurul Izzah and Razaleigh (2020) also demonstrates that a preacher's attitude has a significant impact on how the target community perceives Islam, whether positively or negatively.

From an internal perspective, Imam al-Ghazali (1988) emphasizes that spiritual development, inner strength, and control of the heart are the foundations of a preacher's personality. Qualities such as sincerity, trustworthiness, patience, humility and steadfastness are essential, especially when engaging with the Orang Asli community, which requires a friendly and patient approach (Salbiah et al., 2015). From an external perspective, attitude is reflected in one's appearance, facial expressions, communication style and dedication in carrying out responsibilities. The research by Nurul Izzah and Razaleigh Muhamat (2020) affirms that the positive example set by preachers can have a profound impact in guiding the Orang Asli community. Therefore, the combination of noble internal attitudes and positive external behaviors serves as a reflection of the preacher's character, ultimately strengthening the effectiveness of da'wah.

CONCLUSION

The development of a leadership model for preachers among the Orang Asli community in Malaysia must be grounded in comprehensive competency mastery, encompassing knowledge, self-preparedness, skills and attitude, to ensure that da'wah is delivered effectively, relevantly and in alignment with the socio-cultural context of the target community. The integration of these competencies not only strengthens the credibility of preachers as spiritual leaders but also produces a da'wah approach that is inclusive, strategic and sustainable. Therefore, the proposed leadership model is expected to empower da'wah efforts within the Orang Asli community while also serving as a guiding framework that may be applied to other minority communities in Malaysia.

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