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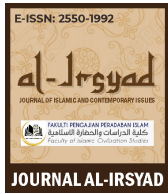
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Badī' al-Zamān Sa'īd Nursī's approach through writing in *da'wah*: A study of effective verbal communication

[Pendekatan Badī' al-Zamān Sa'īd Nursī melalui penulisan dalam dakwah: Kajian komunikasi lisan yang berkesan]



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Da'wah Communication, Writing, Effective *Da'wah*, Badī' al-Zamān Sa'īd Nursī, *Rasā'il al-Nūr*.

ABSTRACT

Effective *da'wah* communication is veritably necessary in maintaining the well-being of the community so that it's always in a state of peace, tranquility and harmony. The traditional medium of preaching that previously only revolved around oral mediums such as lectures and speeches needs to be improved with the method of delivery through writing. Badī' al-Zamān Sa'īd Nursī used the pen as the medium of his preaching, resulting in the work *Rasā'il al-Nūr*, which spread throughout the world. Therefore, this study focuses on the study of Sa'īd Nursī's form of communication while spreading and delivering *da'wah* through jotting styles (*bi al-kitābah*), such as his masterpiece *Rasā'il al-Nūr*, letters and newspapers. This study is a library study and the analysis is based on the document analysis framework (contents analysis). While the book *Rasā'il al-Nūr* is the main basis of every topic of discussion and includes some scholars' views on *da'wah* communication. The results of the study set up that, Sa'īd Nursī's greatest *da'wah* contribution was through the writing approach. The findings also set up that Sa'īd Nursī's *da'wah* experience in colorful stages of his life similar to politics, education, war and so on caused him to be loaded with preaching experience with colorful forms of communication especially in jotting until he was appointed as a contemporary preacher of the Islamic world.

Kata Kunci:

Komunikasi Dakwah, Penulisan, Dakwah Berkesan, Badī' al-

ABSTRAK

Komunikasi dakwah yang berkesan amat diperlukan dalam menjaga kesejahteraan masyarakat agar sentiasa berada dalam keadaan aman, tenteram dan harmoni. Media dakwah tradisional yang sebelum ini hanya berkisarkan

Zamān Sa'īd Nursī, Rasā'il al-Nūr.

kepada medium lisan seperti syarahan dan pidato perlu ditambah baik dengan kaedah penyampaian melalui penulisan. Badī' al-Zamān Sa'īd Nursī menggunakan mata pena sebagai medium dakwahnya sehingga terhasil karya Rasā'il al-Nūr yang tersebar ke seluruh dunia. Justeru, kajian ini tertumpu kepada kajian pendekatan komunikasi efektif Sa'īd Nursī semasa menyebar dan menyampaikan dakwah melalui kaedah penulisan (bi al-kitābah) seperti karya agungnya Rasā'il al-Nūr, surat-menyurat dan akhbar. Kajian ini adalah kajian perpustakaan dan analisisnya pula berdasarkan kerangka analisis dokumen (contents analysis). Manakala kitab Rasā'il al-Nūr menjadi asas utama setiap topik perbincangan serta memasukkan beberapa pandangan sarjana tentang komunikasi dakwah. Hasil kajian mendapati sumbangan dakwah terbesar Sa'īd Nursī adalah melalui pendekatan penulisan. Dapatan kajian juga mendapati pengalaman dakwah Sa'īd Nursī dalam pelbagai lapangan seperti dalam politik, pendidikan, peperangan dan sebagainya menyebabkan beliau kaya dengan pengalaman berdakwah melalui pelbagai pendekatan komunikasi khususnya dalam penulisan, sehingga beliau diberi gelaran tokoh dakwah kontemporari dunia Islam.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Lately, academic studies on Badī' al-Zamān Sa'īd Nursī are gaining ground in Malaysia, especially among academics and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in addition to *Rasā'il al-Nūr* students. This book is considered more valuable since it is self-authored by him in critical conditions such as when he was imprisoned, discarded and exiled (Wan Mohamad, 2015).

Zaidān (2018) stated that Sa'īd Nursī's method of proselytizing through his book *Rasā'il al-Nūr* is a perception that coincides with the current atmosphere. His style and communication techniques, which include oral and non-oral communication are shared in part in *Rasā'il al-Nūr*, while others are told by many other scholars through the storytelling of his students. According to Jalal, Ismail and Ghani (2018), one of the significant weaknesses in delivering contemporary da'wah is the unsuitability of the methods, approaches, or forms of communication used by preachers or dā'īs. These inadequacies result in a lack of impact and may even trigger disagreements. These Islamic communicators are seen as still failing to master the 'da'wah map' of the local area in depth. Hence, that the goal of a da'wah is not achieved. They simply want to relinquish the responsibility of teaching without thinking about the objectives (including communication methods) and learning outcomes (the da'wah effect).

In addition, one of the main challenges of preaching from time immemorial to the present has a close relationship with the problem of approach, including the approach in choosing the right theme or element of communication. Today's dominance of the Islamic community or communicator of the right da'wah approach is still at a minimum level (Don & Badlihsiham, 2012). As a result, the values and dignity of an Islamic communicator such as dā'ī, ustādh or religious scholar eventually plummeted in the eyes of the community.

Effective communication is not only about speech (verbal), but also the ethics of speaking (non-verbal). Effective *da'wah* requires precise instruments and mediums (Rakhmat, 2008). Communication is no longer limited to oral factors but also needs to take into account non-verbal factors, including *da'wah* material, atmosphere, funds, target group, language skills and body language. All these elements of communication need to be mobilized in tandem to ensure that the goals or objectives of the *da'wah* communication are truly achieved (Meerangani, 2019).

Based on this problem, the reviewer feels that it is very natural that Islamic preachers or communicators today are enhanced in their abilities and roles in society with various or multi-skilled skills including mastering the sciences of communication, especially non-oral (non-verbal) communication. In other words, the ability or proficiency of preachers in various fields is a form of transformation after going through a process in history and socio-surrounding societies and their implementation. This is so that, finally, the proselytizing effort gives an optimal impression to the community as a whole (Jalal et al., 2018). Thus, the scope of this study is to examine the form of *da'wah* by Badī' al-Zamān Sa'īd Nursī in disseminating and delivering *tawhīd* pamphlets (Islamic faith) through effective *da'wah* communication of the *bi al-kitābah*, such as his masterpiece *Rasā'il al-Nūr*, letters and newspapers. Among the main books in *Rasā'il al-Nūr* are *al-Maktūbāt* (The Letter), *al-Kalimāt* (The Words), *al-Lama'āt* (The Flashes), and *al-Shu'a'āt* (The Rays).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Among the studies discussed on Sa'īd Nursī and *da'wah* is a study written by Tampubolon (2018) entitled "*Pemikiran dan aktivisme dakwah Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi (1877-1960)*". This study discussed the life history of Sa'īd Nursī, from the first phase to the third phase of his life, and briefly discussed the methods and strategies of Sa'īd Nursī especially in Turkey.

The same goes for the latest study from Amin (2018) entitled "*Pemikiran da'wah Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi*", which has examined the concept of *da'wah* from Sa'īd Nursī, who had to deal with inverse beliefs such as sectarianism, fanaticism, materialism, and others. This study has listed several forms of thinking of Sa'īd Nursī, namely the importance of building a *da'wah* movement (*Nūr* Movement), emphasis on the concept of *murasalāh* (correspondence) as a form of delivering *da'wah*, thwarting the '*uslūb 'ustādhiyyah*' of the Quran as the basis of change (Quran as the main teacher or *ustādih*) and others.

Meanwhile, a study from Wan Mohamad (2015) with title of his study "*Sketsa Pemikiran Badī' al-Zamān Sa'īd Nursī dalam metode da'wah bi al-kitābah: analisis kitab Risalah Al-Nur*", touched on the method of *da'wah bi al-kitābah* (writing) applied by Sa'īd Nursī through the book *Rasā'il al-Nūr*. The justification for this writing, according to him, is that the book of *Rasā'il al-Nūr* has had a huge impact on the whole world when the book was translated into various foreign languages. The continuation of the *da'wah* by his students is spread almost throughout the world, including Malaysia. He has discussed the methods, structure, characteristics, and disciplines of writing in producing this book.

3. METHODOLOGY

This type of research is a library research study. Nazir (2011) stated that library research is a type of research conducted to examine books, literature, notes, and problem-solving reports. Meanwhile, Tanzeh (2009), stated that qualitative research provides research results in the form of descriptive data, in the form of words, writing, and the behavior of the people being observed. In this study, the reviewer used primary data sources and secondary data in the process of collecting data. Primary data are obtained through his book *Rasā'il al-Nūr*, while secondary source data are also obtained through content analysis methods rather than reports on proselytizing communication investigations, resolutions from proselytizing seminars or discourses and *da'wah* communication Sa'īd Nursī, documents from proselytizing bodies and organizations and others.

Some studies are found to have similarities from the point of view of nature and the focus of the study of abstracts. The reviewed article will be created based on a detailed assessment of keywords regarding communication and proselytizing, its practice in 19th century AD Turkey, as well as its relationship to proselytizing treaties in Malaysia. The data obtained have been analyzed using a content analysis framework. Content analysis techniques are understood as a way to find data and then systematically organize records of the results of the data collection (Kriyantono, 2010). The information and analysis contained in this paper can be

used as one of academic contributions and references in developing effective models or methods of proselytizing communication, especially in Malaysia.

4. DA'WAH THROUGH WRITING ACCORDING TO ISLAM: EVIDENCE FROM RASĀ'IL AL-NŪR

Writing is a form of expression of ideas and desires to educate, inform and entertain readers. It is also a form of indirect communication between the writer and the reader through the exchange of ideas in writing (Khosim, Saniff & Ibrahim, 2022; Zainudin, Fakhru Adabi, & Yusmini, 2015).

Writing for *da'wah* has existed since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In addition to helping in the effort to preserve, expand and convey Islamic knowledge and preaching, writing is very important in the official affairs of the Islamic state of Madinah in the era of the Prophet (PBUH). As a result, the medium of writing grew rapidly during the time of the Companions and beyond, especially to spread Islam (Zainudin et al., 2015).

In the field of *da'wah*, the use of inaccurate delivery mediums or media causes one *da'wah* effort to not achieve optimal results. The medium of *da'wah* traditionally, which previously only revolved around oral mediums such as *qawliyah bi al-lisān* and morals such as *da'wah fi'liyyah bi al-uswah*, needs to be improved with the method of delivery through the medium of book or writing (Azzahra', 2022). The role and contribution of previous preachers to the community, especially in Malaysia, includes the call to preach in oral and written form (Rahim, Osman & Basri, 2021).

In general, the type of method of Sa'īd Nursī's *da'wah* is based on the method of *da'wah bi al-hikmah*, the method of *da'wah bi al-hasanah*, or the method of *da'wah al-mujādil al-husnā*, which are adapted from *sūrah al-Naḥl* [16] verse 125 (Sairi, 2012). However, in this study, the researchers divided the communication elements of Sa'īd Nursī's *da'wah* into two parts, verbal communication and non-verbal communication, based on his book, *Rasā'il al-Nūr* (a collection of gatherings of Sa'īd Nursī's studies and the narration of Sa'īd Nursī's personality written by his students).

In the book *Rasā'il al-Nūr*, there are more than 130 titles such as *al-Maktūbāt*, *al-Kalimāt*, *al-Lama'āt*, *al-Shu'a'āt*, and others, produced by Sa'īd Nursī with the main purpose of saving the faith of the community at that time by explaining the essence and essence of the Quran. Apart from its dense content with horizontal and vertical communication themes, the production of these pamphlets is also aimed at defending the students of Sa'īd Nursī (*tullāb al-Nūr*), who face various charges in court, especially arguments on complex matters that touch on the martyrdom of Allah, the hereafter, and others (Sairi, 2015).

5. SA'ĪD NURSĪ'S PREACHING APPROACH THROUGH WRITING

Many scholars recognize Sa'īd Nursī's writings as having a positive impact on the world of Islamic preaching, not only in Turkey but throughout the world. Fighting falsehood with the 'weapon' of writing is the symbol and translation of Sa'īd Nursī's character who longs for peace and unity (Obaidullah, 2015). Realizing in those days that the best medium for storing information was through writing (not video or voice storage), Sa'īd Nursī put much emphasis on the bookkeeping of all his preaching messages, carefully preserved, so that it is durable, easy to spread, guaranteeing authenticity as well as giving space for people to think and reflect on every good word in these tracts (Wan Mohamad, 2015).

Even to further expand and strengthen the influence and role of *Rasā'il al-Nūr* treatise, Sa'īd Nursī focused on the students or students of *Rasā'il al-Nūr*, also known as *tullāb al-nūr*, by opening several *Rasā'il al-Nūr* study places in every place, which is called '*dershane*', so that it spreads to all corners of the world (Nursī, 2011). Such is Sa'īd Nursī's persuasive approach to spreading his preaching. In addition to preaching through the medium of oral communication (face-to-face) such as lectures, speeches, khutbahs, dialogues and so on, Sa'īd Nursī also made the pen the main preaching medium in his life. Even when faced with the government, his fight with the government at that time was not by taking up arms but through writing. Some of Sa'īd Nursī's works were later copied and distributed on a large scale by his students (Faiz, 2017).

According to Awang, Yusoff, Ebrahimi and Yilmaz (2015), this selection of *da'wah* in *bi al-kitābah* began to appear at the end of the *Old Sa'īd* period, and fully in the *New Sa'īd* period. In *Old Sa'īd*'s time, Sa'īd Nursī delivered *da'wah* through three methods, face-to-face, writing in newspapers, and also in the form of pamphlets (leaflets). This method of writing in various mediums is one of the popular methods that boosted his name as a

contemporary scholar. While [Wan Mohamad \(2015\)](#) stated, in addition to writing and collecting *Rasā'il al-Nūr*, Sa'īd Nursī was also involved in writing in newspapers, articles (journals) and magazines.

The content or essence of Sa'īd Nursī's writing contest, on the other hand, is not only about spiritual issues, but his writings and comments that are often published in the prime newspaper that also discuss issues related to politics, current issues, and criticism of leaders and colonialists. His writings have a great impact on readers, whether they are his followers or opponents ([Wan Mohamad, 2015](#)). Through his book, Sa'īd Nursī used various approaches to attract, persuade and influence readers. Among them are the *targhīb* and *tarhīb* methods. *Targhīb* can also be understood as a form of encouragement, good news, and stimulation to a person in various ways sourced from the Quran and *al-Sunnah*, while *tarhīb* refers to a form of fear, intimidation, threat, and punishment in the hereafter ([Rozani, Abdullah, Azizan & Hasan, 2022](#); [Mustapha, Sham & Mokhtar, 2019](#)).

Although it is explained that Sa'īd Nursī has practiced various methods in his *da'wah* communication, verbal and non-verbal, his commitment to *da'wah* through the form of writing or *bi al-kitābah* is more prominent. This is due to limited movement and pressure from the enemies of Islam at that time, so the writing preaching method is seen as more dominant than others, so that he can produce *Kulliyāt Rasā'il al-Nūr* ([Khosim et al., 2022](#)). There are many forms of Sa'īd Nursī's writings, which researchers group into the following four divisions:

5.1 Writing *Rasā'il al-Nūr* (Quranic Tafsir)

The writing and production of the book *Rasā'il al-Nūr* are placed as a special title because it is Sa'īd Nursī's greatest form of communication when delivering his preaching, throughout his life. Sa'īd Nursī's *da'wah* involvement in the field of writing or *da'wah bi al-kitābah* is very numerous and complex and has certain phases, especially in the production of *Rasā'il al-Nūr* ([Wan Mohamad, 2015](#)).

This book includes a collection of Sa'īd Nursī's preaching messages through his verbal and non-verbal communication when delivering his thoughts and preaching messages. Aided by Sa'īd Nursī's pupils or students, writing and re-copying Sa'īd Nursī's writings has become their real work ([Awang et al., 2015](#)). According to Sa'īd Nursī, the book of *Rasā'il al-Nūr* is like a strong diamond sword in the hands of this greatest miracle (the Quran). It forces stubborn enemies to accept every argument in it, forcing them to surrender. The mission of *Rasā'il al-Nūr* is to invite people to the Quran, source from it and refer only to it ([Nursī, 2016](#)).

According to ([Awang et al., 2015 p. 444](#)), the 'text movement' or the writing of *Rasā'il al-Nūr* (including the effort to copy and print this pamphlet) is the main focus of Sa'īd Nursī's preaching:

“Separate from his political movement, is his social movement, also called the textbook-grounded movement, which was organized around the discourses of the *Risāle-i Nur*.”

A series of frequent imprisonments and exiles for many years, this (producing books) is the best way for him to stay in touch with *ṭullāb al-nūr* and the community from various levels ([Awang et al., 2015, pp. 445-449](#)):

“These scholars kept communication with their master Nursī, through letters and by reading and writing the discourses that were transferred by Nursī. With this, Nursī laid the foundation of a new movement with the townies in Barla.”

After various obstacles and tests were overcome for the spread of *Rasā'il al-Nūr*, finally in 1956, *Rasā'il al-Nūr* began to be published independently in Turkey for the first time. The first part to be published is *Sözler, Asāy-i Mūsa* and *Mektūbāt* ([Yusoff et al., 2013, p. 75](#)):

“Nursī's written book during his lifetime totaled six thousand pages, including his correspondences in the form of letters, which are around one thousand pages. All were collected into fourteen volumes in Ottoman Turkish language.”

It turns out that the influence of Sa'īd Nursī's oral communication through the writing of *Rasā'il al-Nūr* had a significant impact on the survival of contemporary *da'wah*, especially in Turkey. There is even a study that says that Sa'īd Nursī's writings are the most read and studied after the Quran and Hadith in Turkey today ([Ishak, Ahmad, Fadzil & Yaacob, 2019](#); [Saritoprak, 2008](#)). As for the history of writing, the collection, and the essence of each chapter and treatise from the *Rasā'il al-Nūr* collection, the researcher has included his discussion in the second chapter, on the title of Sa'īd Nursī's works.

5.2 Writing Letters

One of Sa'īd Nursī's greatest contributions to preaching through writing is through the medium of correspondence. In fact, Sa'īd Nursī has a large volume from the *Rasā'il al-Nūr* collection, which brings together all his letters, which is named *al-Maktūbāt* (The Letters) (Nursī, 2016).

Preaching through the medium of letters began when Sa'īd Nursī was tested by the government's exile to several areas far from his original village. Most of Sa'īd Nursī's life was spent in exile in some foreign districts such as Burdar and Barla, since 1925. Due to his distance from his students, Sa'īd Nursī still tried to communicate with them by writing letters. Sa'īd Nursī wrote a letter to them and sent the letter through a student representative who visited him or a public person who met him (Hariyanto, Atmoko & Rohimah, 2003). The essence of the letter is the answers to every question raised by Sa'īd Nursī's students, especially Hulusi Yahyagil, a famous senior student. Sa'īd Nursī responded to the letter by covering various valuable information in Islamic theology, spiritual life and new problems (Hariyanto et al., 2003).

In this book *al-Maktūbāt*, there are 29 letters that discuss various topics. Among them are Sa'īd Nursī's answers and reasons for refusing to give gifts, Sa'īd Nursī's answer for refusing to be involved in politics, the question of the miracles of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), questions about the nature and names of God, love for the elderly and many more (Nursī, 2016). Such was the great role played by Sa'īd Nursī in preserving *da'wah* in Turkey at that time. Sa'īd Nursī remains in touch with the community, especially among his students, through the medium of writing this letter. Prison and exile did not directly prevent Sa'īd Nursī from preaching to the outside world. The love of brothers and sisters of the same religion swelled in Sa'īd Nursī's heart (Wan Mohamad, 2015).

In some letters, Sa'īd Nursī replied while leaving words of love, in addition to explaining his condition while in exile. For example, in the fourth letter, Sa'īd Nursī begins the letter with the following verse (Nursī, 2016, p. 35):

"My Dear brothers! I'm now on a high peak on Çam Dağı (Pine Mountain), at the top of a potent pine- tree in a tree- house. In lonely solitariness far from men, I've grown habituated to this insulation. When I wish for discussion, I imagine you to be then with me, and I talk with you and find consolation. However, I would like to remain alone then for a month or two, If there's nothing to help it. When I return to Barla, I shall search for some means for the verbal discussion with you I so long for, if you would like it. For now, I'm writing two or three effects that come to mind then in this pine-tree."

5.3 Writing Newspapers

According to Yusoff, Yilmaz & Ebrahimi (2013), quoting Badilli (1998), Sa'īd Nursī has several times wrote articles in several local newspapers such as *Şark ve Kürdistan Gazetesi* and *Volkan*. At the same time, Wan Mohamad (2015) stated that Sa'īd Nursī had written a lot in leading newspapers such as *Tanin*, *İkdam*, *Serbersti*, *Mîzân* and *Şark ve Kürdistan Gazetesi* about politics, especially about the constitution based on Islamic *sharī'a*. He wrote a total of around thirty articles in the newspapers in one and a half years between 1908 and 1909.

Sa'īd Nursī wrote in several newspapers and magazines as a way to preserve public order by reconciling several parties who were at war at the time (Sairi, 2012). In addition to the newspaper, Sa'īd Nursī also wrote some articles to be published in the *Volkan* journal, which at the time had the largest number of readers in Turkey. Active in public writing, Sa'īd Nursī and some of his followers were arrested for political charges. Sa'īd Nursī was released after successfully defending himself in a military court (Yusoff et al., 2013).

6. CONCLUSION

In general, his thoughts and beliefs are still not fully recognized by the public, unlike other major figures such as al-Imām al-Ghazālī, Syeikh Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Syeikh Muḥammad 'Abduh, and others. Many Muslim scholars have listed the Sa'īd Nursī's movement in Turkey as among the three important movements in the history of Islam, which is seen as having played an important role in the effort to preserve the faith of Muslims. They also listed Sa'īd Nursī as the figure of the modern-century influential Islamic movement around the world.

Thus, this study can highlight the contributions and services of Sa'īd Nursī specifically in the field of *da'wah* communication through his magnum opus work, *Rasā'il al-Nūr*, in the aspect of structuring effective *da'wah* communication to be cultivated and appreciated by the Muslim community in Malaysia in particular. Among the advantages and privileges of Sa'īd Nursī is that he is a figure who lived in peacetime and wartime, the period before the fall of the Turkish caliphate of 'Uthmāniah and after its fall, as well as a full-time preacher who lived in a multi-racial and religious society such as Malaysia. Therefore, he is indeed a suitable and deserving figure to be elevated as one of the models of preachers who are suitable and relevant in today's society, especially in Malaysia, within the context of effective *da'wah* communication.

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