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M. Quraish Shihab's Humanist Da'wah Paradigm: Integration of Islamic Interpretation, Ethics, and Communication Management

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the paradigm of humanist da'wah of M. Quraish Shihab through the integration of interpretation, communication ethics, and Islamic da'wah management. The focus of the study is directed at Quraish Shihab's interpretive approach in Tafsir al-Mishbah, especially on da'wah verses that emphasize the principles of gentleness, dialogue, and wisdom such as QS. an-Nahl: 125 and QS. al-Hujurat: 11–12. This study uses a literature study method with content analysis techniques on Quraish Shihab's primary works and relevant scientific articles. The results of the study indicate that the paradigm of humanist da'wah offered by Quraish Shihab is based on three main foundations: first, contextual interpretation that combines the textual meaning of the Qur'an with social reality; second, Qur'anic communication ethics that emphasize politeness, respect for human dignity, and avoidance of symbolic violence; third, da'wah communication management that is adaptive to media developments and the character of modern audiences. The integration of these three aspects gives birth to a moderate, dialogical, and relevant model of da'wah for multicultural societies.

Keywords : Humanist Da'wah, Quraish Shihab, Islamic Communication Ethics, Interpretation of the Qur'an, Da'wah Management.

Introduction

The dynamics of Indonesian religious life have undergone significant changes with the development of information technology, social mobility, and global interaction. These changes influence how people receive, understand, and respond to religious messages. In this context, da'wah can no longer be understood simply as the textual delivery of religious teachings, but rather as a strategic communication process that demands social sensitivity, mastery of interpretive methodology, and the ability to manage messages effectively and ethically. This shift in the da'wah landscape is exacerbated by the increase in religious content on social media, which often presents confrontational and exclusive discourse, and often causes public uproar due to miscommunication and misinterpretation. ¹Therefore, there is a need for a more humanistic and moderate da'wah model rooted in substantive Islamic ethical values.

In the tradition of Islamic thought in Indonesia, M. Quraish Shihab is one of the figures who offers a humanist paradigm of da'wah through the integration of contextual interpretation, communication ethics, and da'wah message management. His works—such as *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, *Wawasan Al-Qur'an*, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an*, and *Lentera Hati*—many emphasize that da'wah must present Islam as a source of enlightenment, peace, and respect for human dignity. ²Shihab's views are rooted in the principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy for the universe), which is emphasized as the core of Islamic teachings, namely to bring compassion and goodness to all humanity.

In *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, Shihab asserts that understanding the Qur'an cannot be separated from the social, cultural, and human context. He criticizes approaches to da'wah that rely solely on the literalness of the text without considering the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and the needs of

¹Ahmad Zainal Abidin, "Digital Preaching and the Challenges of Religious Moderation," *Journal of Islamic Communication* 8, no. 2 (2020): 145.

² M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, Vol. 1 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), 19–25.

contemporary society. ³Thus, the humanist da'wah he developed relies on contextual interpretation that combines linguistic and historical analysis and the universal moral messages of the Qur'anic verses. This approach aligns with the updated methodology of modern tafsir, which emphasizes the relevance of Qur'anic teachings to social problems throughout the ages.⁴

Beyond interpretation, Shihab emphasized the importance of ethical Islamic communication as the core of da'wah. He argued that conveying religious messages must be done with wisdom, dialogue, and good advice, not intimidating rhetoric. ⁵Ethical da'wah, Shihab argued, is part of an effort to revive the moral values that are the foundation of Islam. This view is reinforced by various Islamic communication literature, which emphasizes that da'wah must prioritize politeness (*qaulan layyinan*), clarity (*qaulan sadidan*), and respect for the audience. ⁶This ethical approach is highly relevant in the context of a pluralistic society that requires space for dialogue, not conflict.

The third aspect of Shihab's humanist da'wah paradigm is the importance of da'wah communication management. In the modern context, da'wah is not merely a lecture, but involves planning, message development, audience segmentation, media selection, and impact evaluation. ⁷Shihab emphasized that religious messages must be adapted to the situation and conditions of society to avoid misinterpretation or social tension. This principle aligns with contemporary da'wah communication theory, which views da'wah as a persuasive

³ M. Quraish Shihab, *Insights into the Qur'an* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), 12–15.

⁴ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 146.

⁵ M. Quraish Shihab, *Grounding the Qur'an* (Bandung: Mizan, 1992), 88.

⁶ Syamsuddin Arif, *Islamic Communication* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2019), 54–55.

⁷ Moh. Ali Aziz, *The Science of Da'wah* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia, 2016), 102–103.

communication process that must consider the psychological and cultural characteristics of the audience.⁸

The presence of M. Quraish Shihab's humanist preaching is crucial in the context of the increasing polarization of religious discourse in the public sphere. A preaching model that relies solely on the superiority of truth often generates resistance and even triggers conflict. In contrast, the humanist paradigm offered by Shihab emphasizes a dialogical, moderate, and empathetic approach that strengthens social harmony and builds mature religious awareness.⁹ Therefore, this study seeks to comprehensively examine M. Quraish Shihab's humanist preaching paradigm through the integration of interpretation, communication ethics, and preaching management as an effort to present a preaching strategy relevant to the needs of Indonesia's multicultural society.

Research methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research design to examine the humanist da'wah paradigm in Islamic thought. This library research was chosen because it focuses on conceptual analysis, thought review, and theoretical exploration without involving empirical data collection in the field. This method allows researchers to examine various relevant written sources, such as books, journal articles, research reports, institutional documents, and other scientific works as a basis for developing scientific arguments.¹⁰

M. Quraish Shihab. This method was chosen because the research focuses on examining ideas, thought constructions, and interpretive

⁸ Hafidhuddin and Jauhari, *Management of Da'wah* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2005), 27–29.

⁹ Azyumardi Azra, *Islam Nusantara and Religious Moderation* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia, 2019), 112.

¹⁰ Mestika Zed, *Library Research Methods*, Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2008.

approaches contained in published scientific works, thus eliminating the need for field data collection. Literature review allows researchers to explore primary texts in the form of Shihab's authoritative works as well as secondary literature related to humanist da'wah, Islamic communication, and da'wah ethics .¹¹

The primary data sources for this research are the works of M. Quraish Shihab, which explicitly and implicitly contain the ideas of humanist da'wah, especially Tafsir al-Mishbah, Wawasan al-Qur'an, Membumikan Al-Qur'an, Lentera Hati, and several other thematic works. These works were chosen because they reflect Shihab's mindset in interpreting the Qur'an with a contextual approach and emphasize the values of humanity, dialogue, and respect for human dignity as the core of da'wah. Secondary literature in the form of books, journal articles, theses, dissertations, and previous research that examines Shihab's thoughts, da'wah theory, Islamic communication theory, and the discourse of Qur'anic humanism is used as strengthening and complementary materials to expand the scope of the analysis.¹²

Data collection techniques were conducted through close reading of primary and secondary texts, followed by a process of recording, coding concepts, and thematic categorization based on three main research focuses: interpretation, da'wah ethics, and Islamic communication management. This process enabled researchers to identify patterns of relationships and integration of humanist da'wah concepts as developed by Shihab, particularly how he combining the principles of gentleness, wisdom, exemplary behavior, dialogue, and orientation towards human welfare in da'wah activities .¹³

¹¹ Zed, Mestika, *Library Research Methods* (Jakarta: Obor Indonesia Foundation, 2008), 3–5.

¹² Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), 15.

¹³ M. Quraish Shihab, *Grounding the Qur'an* (Bandung: Mizan, 1999), 48–51.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study indicate that M. Quraish Shihab's Humanist Da'wah Paradigm is a da'wah model built on three main epistemological foundations: a contextual Qur'anic interpretation approach, Islamic communication ethics, and da'wah management based on an understanding of human psychology and socio-culture. An in-depth study of Shihab's works and related scientific literature confirms that humanist da'wah is not merely a communication technique, but rather a framework of thought rooted in fundamental Islamic values and simultaneously addresses the challenges of the modern era characterized by plurality, complexity, and social transformation.¹⁴

This study found that Quraish Shihab positions humans as the center of the structure of da'wah. This is evident in how he understands the message of the Qur'an as a teaching that aims to glorify human dignity (*karāmah al-insān*) and guide them towards goodness in the most gentle and understanding manner. In various verse analyses, especially in *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, Shihab explains that wisdom, politeness, and dialogue are absolute requirements for successful da'wah delivery.¹⁵ Da'wah for Shihab is not an authoritative monologue, but rather a two-way communication process that demands respect for human reason and an understanding of the diversity of people's life experiences.

Research findings on the dimensions of interpretation indicate that Quraish Shihab's interpretive method significantly influenced his approach to da'wah. His *maudhu'i* method of interpretation and contextual approach allow da'wah to be understood not merely as the delivery of texts, but as the delivery of meanings relevant to social reality. He frequently emphasized that da'wah verses, such as Surah An-Nahl: 125, cannot be separated from the context of comprehensive Qur'anic values, particularly the values of compassion, justice, and wisdom.

¹⁴ M. Quraish Shihab, *Insights into the Qur'an* (Bandung: Mizan, 2013), 21–28.

¹⁵ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, Volume 1 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2001), 45–47.

¹⁶Through a modern hermeneutical approach closer to the views of Sahiron Syamsuddin and Fazlur Rahman, Quraish Shihab positions da'wah as an activity that requires a deep understanding of the text and context.¹⁷

Furthermore, the research found that the ethics of da'wah hold a central position in Shihab's humanist paradigm. He argued that a da'i is not only a conveyor of religious messages, but also a representative of Islamic morality. Therefore, every form of da'wah must avoid verbal violence, intimidation, generalizations, or demeaning attitudes towards others. The ethics of da'wah, according to Shihab, is a reflection of a da'i's intellectual honesty and spiritual sincerity. In "Grounding the Qur'an," he emphasized that many misunderstandings in da'wah arise because da'i fail to understand the conditions of their audience, or instead turn da'wah into a platform for confrontation and non-dialogical claims of truth.¹⁸

These findings align with the ethical theories of Islamic communication developed by thinkers such as Alwi Shihab and Jalaluddin Rakhmat, which emphasize the importance of trust, mutual respect, and interpersonal ethics in the process of religious communication. ¹⁹Therefore, the study concludes that Quraish Shihab's humanist paradigm is inseparable from the understanding that the preacher's morality is key to the success of da'wah itself.

In the Islamic communication management dimension, research found that Quraish Shihab integrates audience understanding as a prerequisite for successful da'wah. For him, da'wah management is not just about

¹⁶ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, Volume 7 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), 323–325.

¹⁷Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Hermeneutics of the Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2003), 73–85.

¹⁸ M. Quraish Shihab, *Grounding the Koran* (Bandung: Mizan, 2014), 108–120.

¹⁹ Alwi Shihab, *Inclusive Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 1998), 93–101; Jalaluddin Rakhmat, *Communication Psychology* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2005), 51–60.

technical delivery, but encompasses the planning process, communication strategy, media selection, and evaluation of da'wah results. He encourages da'is (preachers) to adapt to technological developments and modern lifestyles. He notes the use of friendly language, judicious use of digital media, and sensitivity to social change as essential elements of contemporary da'wah.²⁰

Other literature research shows that the humanist da'wah management model practiced by Quraish Shihab is highly effective in curbing verbal radicalism and increasing public acceptance of moderate religious messages.²¹ This model has also influenced the development of da'wah trends in Indonesia, which are increasingly moving toward da'wah based on public education, cross-cultural dialogue, and a more professional communication approach.²²

Furthermore, research results show that Shihab's humanist paradigm also makes a significant contribution to improving the quality of religious communication in multicultural societies. A da'wah approach that emphasizes empathy, tolerance, and respect for diversity has proven more easily accepted in the context of a pluralistic society like Indonesia. In many of his writings, Shihab strongly rejects da'wah approaches that are exclusive, judgmental, or claim absolute truth without considering social sensitivity.¹⁰ This view is in line with the concept of "moderate Islam" which is now widely developed and has become an important part of strengthening social harmony in Indonesia.

Overall, this study concludes that M. Quraish Shihab's humanist da'wah paradigm represents a powerful methodological integration of

²⁰ Asep Saepudin Jahar, "Islamic Communication from the Perspective of Quraish Shihab," *Journal of Islamic Communication* 5, no. 2 (2019): 100–110.

²¹ Abdul Mustaqim, "Humanist Da'wah in Contemporary Interpretation," *Journal of Da'wah Science* 40, no. 1 (2020): 53–70.

²² Moh. Ali Aziz, *The Science of Da'wah* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2017), 144–155.

text, context, ethics, and communication strategies. This approach not only contributes to the science of da'wah but also enriches the discourse on Islam, a mercy for all the worlds, in the modern world. The research findings suggest that if implemented consistently, this paradigm can become an alternative da'wah framework that is soothing, relevant, and effective in building healthy religious dialogue.

In his works of thought, especially *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Quraish Shihab presents a humanist face of da'wah: da'wah that is based on contextual interpretation of the Qur'an, driven by the ethical principles of Islamic communication, and strategically planned through communication management. *Tafsir al-Mishbah* itself is a complete interpretation of the Qur'an consisting of 15 volumes and is explicitly designed to explain the meaning of the Qur'an relevant to the needs of the people today, so that it can be understood and practiced by a wide audience. In the introduction to this interpretation, Shihab states that his interpretation approach prioritizes the connection between the meaning of the text and human reality, including aspects of moral education and effective social communication.²³

M. Quraish Shihab's humanist da'wah paradigm rests on the fundamental belief that the text of the Qur'an must be understood contextually, communicatively, and in accordance with the needs of modern humans. Quraish Shihab positions humans not merely as objects of da'wah, but as dialogical partners whose dignity is respected. Therefore, da'wah must not be coercive, judgmental, or coercive, but must be built through a persuasive, polite, and ethical approach. This approach can be found consistently in *the Tafsir al-Mishbah*, which is the most comprehensive representation of Quraish Shihab's hermeneutic and Islamic communication thinking. In his commentary on QS. al-Nahl: 125, for example, he emphasizes that the commandment *ud'u ilā sabīli rabbika*

²³ Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Mishbah: Messages, Impressions, and Harmony of the Qur'an*, Vol. 1-15 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2001). pp. 1-15.

bi al- ḥ ikmah includes the ability to understand the psychology of the audience, adapt language, and build communication that does not hurt the feelings of others, so that da'wah becomes a space of encounter that humanizes humans and not the opposite.²⁴

Quraish Shihab's interpretation thus demonstrates that da'wah must consider three main aspects: wisdom, ethical dialogue, and sound argumentation. These three are the foundation of the humanist da'wah paradigm. Nugraha and Gustianda note that when Quraish Shihab interprets the verse, he not only explains the linguistic meaning but also opens up a space for social interpretation, emphasizing the importance of not harming, not demeaning, and not using da'wah as a tool of power. This approach aligns with the idea of religious humanism, namely that Quranic values must be interpreted with attention to the conditions of humanity as they are.

Quraish Shihab's construction of humanist da'wah is also strengthened by the ethical principles of Qur'anic communication, which he explains through his interpretation of QS. al-Hujurat: 11–12. This interpretation rejects all forms of criticism, prejudice, and the spread of disgrace as part of un-Islamic communication behavior. In Jubaidi's study, Quraish Shihab views these verses as an effort to form a peaceful, dialogical society based on mutual respect, and to make the ethics of speech the foundation of social relations.²⁵ From this, it is clear that humanist da'wah cannot be separated from the ethics of communication. Da'wah is not only about conveying the truth, but also how the truth is communicated with dignity.

The ethical dimension of communication within Quraish Shihab's da'wah paradigm also appears relevant in the context of digital media.

²⁴Nugraha Andri and Nana Gustianda, "Dakwah ala Quraish Shihab: Interpretation of Surat Al-Nahl: 125," *Al-Kauniyah* 5, no.1 (2025): 44–45.

²⁵ Adon Jubaidi, "Prejudice and Communication Ethics as Conflict's Resolution," *Tablighi Da'wah* 20, no.2 (2025): 102–104.

Akbar et al.'s study asserts that *Tafsir al-Mishbah* provides a strong normative framework for safeguarding speech, avoiding verbal abuse, and fostering empathetic dialogue on social media. ²⁶These findings emphasize that the communication ethics taught by Quraish Shihab transcend time and space, even serving as a guideline for interaction in a digital era rife with hate speech. This relevance demonstrates that Quraish Shihab's humanist da'wah is not solely text-based but also responsive to contemporary communication issues.

Another crucial aspect of Quraish Shihab's humanist da'wah paradigm is communication management. Throughout his da'wah activities, both on television and digital channels like Narasi TV, he consistently prioritizes message structure, delivery strategies, and the selection of gentle and inclusive diction. Arifin and Husin's study shows that Quraish Shihab's success lies not only in the depth of his knowledge but also in his ability to manage communication systematically, measurably, and relevantly to the characteristics of modern audiences. ²⁷He uses easily understood language, avoids intimidating terminology, and offers more explanations than judgments. This demonstrates the integration of interpretation with communication management in the humanist da'wah paradigm.

The integration of interpretation, ethics, and communication management within M. Quraish Shihab's humanist da'wah paradigm is also reinforced by the methodological model he uses in *Tafsir al-Mishbah*. Alfikar and Taufiq's study found that Quraish Shihab's interpretive method is thematic-contextual, critical, and oriented toward solving social problems. ²⁸For him, tafsir is not merely the act of interpreting

²⁶ Muhammad Akbar et al., "Communication Ethics on Social Media: Re-examining Through Tafsir al-Mishbah," *Komunike* 17, no.1 (2025): 12–14.

²⁷ Samsul Arifin and Alfiansyah Husin, "Persuasive Communication...," *Al-Maquuro'* (2024): 5–7.

²⁸ Abdi Risalah Husni Alfikar and Ahmad Kamil Taufiq, "Muhammad Quraish Shihab's Special Method in His Interpretation," *Journal of Faith and Spirituality* (2024): 19–20.

words, but the process of interpreting human reality. Therefore, tafsir must address ethical, social, and humanitarian needs. This emphasis on the humanitarian aspect strengthens da'wah's position as a process of ennobling, not dominating.

Furthermore, Quraish Shihab's humanist da'wah paradigm can also be seen through a study of the relevance of *the Tafsir al-Mishbah* for modern society. Amin and Abror point out that one of the important characteristics of this interpretation is its ability to present the Quran as a living, contextual, and down-to-earth guide.²⁹ This has a significant impact on how da'wah is understood in Indonesian Muslim society: da'wah is not an instrument of hegemony, but a vehicle for moral education that respects diversity. This paradigm aligns with the pluralistic character of Indonesian society and requires an inclusive da'wah approach.

Through the integration of interpretation, ethics, and communication management, M. Quraish Shihab's humanist da'wah paradigm offers a contemporary da'wah model that is not only Qur'anic but also communicative and relevant to a multicultural society. This model requires da'is to understand audience psychology, maintain communication etiquette, and master effective message delivery strategies. Humanist da'wah does not view the audience as passive objects, but as partners in the search for truth. Thus, Quraish Shihab's da'wah paradigm makes a significant contribution to the practice of modern da'wah that is friendly, argumentative, and full of empathy, while remaining firmly rooted in Qur'anic values.

In line with this, Quraish Shihab's humanist da'wah paradigm also integrates the Quran's recommendation to avoid using language that offends human dignity. He interprets Surah al-Baqarah, verse 83—the

²⁹ Muhammad Habib Izzuddin Amin and Indal Abror, "Tafsir Al-Mishbah Quraish Shihab: Relevance and Contextualization," *Basha'ir* 5, no.1 (2024): 55–56.

command to speak good words (qaulan ma'rūfā) to fellow human beings—as a fundamental principle of Islamic communication. In certain readings, this command encompasses not only the command to avoid harm but also the obligation to build harmonious social relations.³⁰ This interpretation enriches the understanding that da'wah must fundamentally develop the value of compassion and refrain from practices of symbolic violence.

Furthermore, the increasingly complex dynamics of da'wah in the digital era demonstrate the urgency of a humanist paradigm. Harahap and Yusuf's research on the construction of da'wah in the digital space found that Quraish Shihab's approach is relevant for the modern generation because it offers a rational, moderate, and polite delivery style.³¹ The success of his da'wah on social media and YouTube platforms is not solely due to his popularity, but also to his structured, informative, and empathetic communication style. This demonstrates that the integration of communication ethics, message management, and interpretation methodology is key to the success of humanist da'wah in the contemporary context.

Another aspect that strengthens the humanist da'wah paradigm is Quraish Shihab's concern for the diversity of Indonesian society. In several of his commentaries, he emphasizes that plurality is not an obstacle to da'wah, but rather a space for productive dialogue. Maulana's study of Quraish Shihab's thoughts on diversity shows that he understood the Quran as a book of guidance that encourages cooperation among humankind, not a limitation of exclusivity.³² Therefore, humanist da'wah should be able to bring Islamic values closer to the conditions of

³⁰ M. Quraish Shihab, *Insights into the Qur'an* (Bandung: Mizan, 2001), 84–85.

³¹ R. Harahap and R. Yusuf, "Digital Da'wah and Ethical Challenges in the Social Media Era," *Journal of Da'wah Science* 44, no. 2 (2024): 211–213.

³² Ahmad Maulana, "Quraish Shihab's Thoughts on Tolerance and Diversity," *Journal of Qur'an Studies* 12, no. 1 (2023): 33–36.

a multicultural society. By understanding this reality, Quraish Shihab directs da'wah as a process of human ennobling through awareness, not indoctrination.

Conclusion

The humanist da'wah paradigm formulated and practiced by M. Quraish Shihab emphasizes that Islamic da'wah cannot be separated from the dimensions of humanity, ethics, and communication wisdom. Through an interpretive approach based on social and historical contexts, Quraish Shihab shows that the Qur'an commands the delivery of messages in a gentle, argumentative manner, and does not prioritize violence, as seen in his interpretation of QS. An-Nahj 1 : 125 and QS. Āli 'Imrān: 159 which he interprets as the methodological foundation of dialogical and adaptive da'wah for the audience. The ethics of da'wah in Quraish Shihab's framework of thought are not only understood as moral principles, but as epistemological foundations that determine the quality of religious communication. Ethics such as trustworthiness, honesty, politeness, and respect for differences are integral parts of an effective da'wah process. Based on an analysis of his da'wah ideas and practices, it can be concluded that M. Quraish Shihab's humanist da'wah paradigm offers a solid methodological update: it places humans as subjects, not objects of da'wah; it integrates the authority of texts with context; it emphasizes the importance of ethics as a valid condition for da'wah; and it manages religious communication as a scientific and welfare-oriented process. This paradigm is not only important for the development of da'wah studies, but also serves as an intellectual contribution to efforts to build a friendly, civilized, and relevant face of Islam to the challenges of the times.

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