

Research Article

Living Inclusive Da'wah: A Phenomenological Study of the Multi-Religious Community of Pengalangan Village, Gresik

Ahmad Zainuddin,^{1*} Moch. Muwaffiqillah,² Moch. Bachrurrosyady Amrulloh,³

^{1,3} Universitas Kiai Abdullah Faqih Gresik, Indonesia.

² Universitas Islam Negeri Syekh Wasil Kediri, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the inclusive da'wah model applied by Muslims in Pengalangan Village, Menganti District, Gresik, a village with a multi-religious community structure. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, this study collects data through interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyses it using a multidisciplinary approach that includes da'wah theory, sociology, and anthropology. The results of the study indicate that the practice of inclusive da'wah in Pengalangan Village serves as a living model of da'wah, shaped through exemplary social interactions, the internalisation of Islamic values emphasising tolerance, and interfaith dialogue as a preventive measure against early conflicts, all rooted in social capital derived from kinship systems, mutual aid, and the awareness of living in harmony. This model is not only effective in fostering interfaith harmony but also strengthens social cohesion and preserves local cultural wisdom that does not depend on specific figures, structures, or social institutions. These findings highlight the importance of a contextual and humanistic approach to dakwah in pluralistic societies.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a very high level of diversity, both in terms of religion, ethnicity, culture, and language (Redaktur, n.d.). In this context, Islamic preaching has a strategic role not only as a means of conveying Islamic values, but also as a medium for maintaining diversity and building social cohesion. Dakwah should not be limited to the formal aspects of religious propagation but must serve as a bridge for communication among communities, strengthen tolerance, and prevent potential horizontal conflicts in a diverse society.

The urgency of inclusive and adaptive dakwah becomes increasingly evident when religious practices in public spaces often become sensitive issues. A monolithic, exclusive, and insensitive approach to dakwah in a multicultural context has the potential to cause rejection or social tension. Therefore, it is important to develop a model of dakwah that embraces rather than judges; invites rather than forces; and engages in dialogue rather than dominates. Inclusive dakwah is an urgent need for Muslims in building a peaceful and mutually respectful civilisation amid Indonesia's diversity. Recent international scholarship also stresses the significance of

¹ *Corresponding author: ahmad.zainuddin@unkafa.ac.id

² wafiqmuhammad@iainkediri.ac.id

³ moch.amrulloh@unkafa.ac.id

interfaith dialogue and religious peacebuilding as effective frameworks to reduce prejudice and foster sustainable coexistence across religious boundaries (Abu-Nimer, 2021; Patel, 2022). This perspective enriches the discourse on multicultural dakwah by connecting local practices with broader global theories of dialogue and reconciliation.

Pengalangan Village, Menganti Subdistrict, Gresik Regency, is a concrete example of a pluralistic community at the local level. The village is inhabited by followers of various religions, with Muslims as the majority and Hindu and Christian communities as minorities (<https://desapengalangan.gresikkab.go.id/>, n.d.). The uniqueness of this village lies in the natural social harmony that has developed between followers of different religions. Muslims in this village not only give space to Hindus to practise their religion, but also support their existence. This is evidenced by the establishment of two magnificent and well-maintained temples in the middle of the Muslim community.

The caution exercised by the Muslim community of Pengalangan Village in maintaining harmony is reflected in their selective approach to choosing preachers or da'is to be invited to their community. An interview with Syahrowi explains that the da'is invited are not only competent in religious knowledge but are also known for their tolerant, open-minded attitudes and ability to respect differences (Interview with Syahrowi, Syuriyah Nahdlatul Ulama Ranting Pengalangan. January 27, 2025). The da'wah (religious preaching) delivered also emphasises universal Islamic values such as compassion, justice, and respect for fellow human beings, without touching on sensitive issues that could disrupt interfaith harmony.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of multicultural dakwah in the context of a diverse society. Fauzi's research emphasises the importance of inclusive dakwah communication in a pluralistic society (Fauzi, 2020). Fitriani and Wahyuni show that dakwah delivered with a local cultural approach is more easily accepted in a heterogeneous society (Chairozi, 2025). Research by Rahman on dakwah in the Bali region found that interfaith cooperation can be strengthened through social dakwah (H. Rahman, 2022). Meanwhile, Syahrir highlighted the role of tolerant preachers in shaping public opinion that is friendly to diversity in urban communities (Syahrir, 2023). Hendra examined non-Muslim perceptions of Islamic dakwah and found that a humanistic approach is more widely accepted (Hendra et al., 2020).

However, most of these studies still focus on urban contexts or regions with strong political dynamics, and few have explored in depth how da'wah practices unfold in villages with relatively stable pluralistic social structures. This is where the research gap lies. This study aims to explore two main things: first, the inclusive attitude of Muslims in Pengalangan Village in responding to multi-religious communities, and second, the model of da'wah implemented to create tolerant Muslims who are able to maintain harmony among religious communities. Using a phenomenological approach, this study will explore the direct experiences of the community in da'wah interactions amid diversity.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological research design to understand the experiences of Muslims in Pengalangan Village in carrying out da'wah (proselytising) in a multi-religious society. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with religious and community leaders, participatory observation of religious and social activities, and documentation in the form of archives, photographs, and da'wah materials. The research involved two key informants consisting of religious leaders who play a central role in da'wah activities, and seven supporting informants including community leaders, youth representatives, and members of minority groups. Pengalangan Village itself is one of the villages in Menganti Subdistrict, Gresik Regency, characterised by a plural composition of society with religious diversity (Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity) as well as ethnic diversity (Javanese and Madurese communities). This plural social setting provides a rich context for understanding how inclusive da'wah is practised.

Data analysis was conducted using a multidisciplinary approach (F. Rahman & Hidayat Ma'ruf, 2022), combining perspectives from da'wah studies, the sociology of religion, and cultural anthropology to achieve a comprehensive understanding. The phenomenological analysis followed several stages: (1) bracketing, by setting aside the researcher's assumptions to focus on participants' lived experiences; (2) horizontalisation, by identifying and treating all significant statements from informants with equal value; (3) clustering, by grouping the statements into themes that describe patterns of inclusive da'wah; and (4) textural and structural description, by integrating the themes into a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Data validity was strengthened through triangulation of sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sociological Reality & Diversity of Pengalangan Residents

The word Pengalangan is believed to originate from alang-alang or ilalang, which means tall or long grass that grows abundantly in the area that is now called Pengalangan. In the syntax or grammar of the Indonesian language, the root word of Pengalangan is 'alang,' which is prefixed with 'Peng-' and suffixed with 'an,' resulting in Pengalangan. What the people of Pengalangan believe is consistent with the grammar, namely the word alang-alang or ilalang. Pengalangan Village is one of 22 villages in Menganti Subdistrict. This village can be considered a border area due to its geographical location at the border between Gresik City and Surabaya City. Pengalangan has six administrative hamlets, two of which—Bongso Wetan and Bongso Kulon—have a majority Hindu population. Interestingly, the Hindu followers in these two hamlets are not of Javanese or Balinese ethnicity but of Madurese ethnicity. They arrived in the Pengalangan area in 1910 with an initial population of 27 people (Sadu Gunawan et al., 2020) and have since grown to 764 people (<https://desapengalangan.gresikkab.go.id/>, n.d.).

They refer to themselves as JAMALI, an acronym for 'Jawa, Madura, and Bali.' They identify themselves as a blend of these three cultures. The communities of Bongso Wetan and Kulon were once a unified entity bound by various Javanese agricultural traditions, such as Sedekah Bumi, seed-planting ceremonies, and Malam Satu Suro, which is held on the day of Tilem Kesanga. However, after the community adopted the teachings of Hindu Dharma-JAMALI, they acknowledged that these traditions were gradually replaced by more "Balinese" Hindu celebrations, such as the Malam Satu Suro ceremony being replaced by the Pangrupukan ceremony (Sadu Gunawan et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the tradition that is still practised is Sedekah Bumi. Interestingly, Sedekah Bumi in Pengalangan is not only performed by Madurese Hindus but also by all layers of society in Pengalangan, both Hindu and Muslim.

The tradition of sedekah bumi, which is also a tradition in many villages in Java, is preserved in Pengalangan Village. Sedekah bumi in Pengalangan is carried out jointly by followers of two major religions, namely Islam and Hinduism, as well as a small number of Christians. They not only assist one another physically by attending and participating in the series of activities but also collectively contribute food, drinks, fruits, and other items to be brought to the Earth Offering event location as an expression of gratitude from the villagers for God's blessings over the past year. Even at the end of the event, each religious leader has the same opportunity to lead prayers in their own way. Throughout the event, there is no special treatment given to one religion over another; all play a role and have equal opportunities.



Figure 1. Earth offering ceremony in Pengalangan Village, Menganti, Gresik. 4 August 2024.
Sumber: <https://radarbangsa.co.id/warga-dusun-pengalangan-gresik-gelar-sedekah-bumi/>

Harmony and togetherness are also evident when a family member or relative passes away and has a different religion. In this situation, they are there for each other to provide support. For example, when a Hindu family member passes away, the Muslim family also helps to meet the needs of the bereaved family. In Pengalangan Village, Hindu bodies are not cremated as is commonly done in Bali with the *ngaben* ceremony; instead, they are buried in the same way as Muslims (Nadiroh, 2023). In Bongso Kulon Hamlet, according to Syahrowi, funerals for Hindus and Muslims are not separated; they are buried in the same location. This also applies vice versa; when a Muslim family member passes away, during the seven-day *tahlil* ceremony, Hindu families also attend the funeral home and stay until late at night. No one from the Hindu community complains

or criticises the seven-day tahlil ceremony, whether it be about the loud recitation of tahlil, the crowd of visitors, or other matters.

The harmonious reality between religious communities in Pengalangan Village, Menganti, Gresik, is also reflected in the attitude of mutual respect and appreciation of religious rights. This mutual respect is clearly evident in the behaviour of Muslims towards Hindus and vice versa, especially in daily life. Muslims in Pengalangan have sufficient knowledge about the values and prohibitions in Hindu teachings, such as in the context of consuming beef. This is evident in trading practices, where Muslim sellers consciously avoid offering beef-based products to Hindu buyers. Muhajir, Chairman of the Pengalangan Village Mosque Management Board, said that during the distribution of sacrificial meat on Eid al-Adha, Muslims choose to give other types of meat to their Hindu neighbours or relatives as a form of respect for their beliefs. Furthermore, during Nyepi Day, Muslims refrain from using loudspeakers during the call to prayer as a sign of empathy towards the Hindu community's need for meditation in silence (Interview with Muhajir, Head of the Pengalangan Village Mosque Management Board. January 28, 2025).

The harmonious coexistence among religious communities in Pengalangan Village reflects an inclusive and practical understanding of religion. From a religious perspective, Muslims refraining from offering beef products to Hindus, as well as the practice of adjusting the use of loudspeakers during Nyepi Day, demonstrate a spirit of tolerance rooted in the principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. Islam emphasises the importance of maintaining public welfare and avoiding things that may cause harm or danger to others. Such practices embody the principle of 'laa dharara wa laa dhiraar,' which forms the foundation of social relations in Islam (Shihab, 1997). From a sociological and anthropological perspective, the practice of tolerance in Pengalangan Village demonstrates how local social and cultural structures play a significant role in maintaining harmony. Muslims and Hindus live side by side, forming strong social relationships, marked by joint participation in social activities and the construction of places of worship. This demonstrates high social cohesion, as Émile Durkheim argued that social solidarity can be built through collective consciousness, regardless of religious, ethnic, or racial differences (Durkheim, 1997). From an anthropological perspective, practices such as not sharing beef and providing spiritual space during Nyepi can be interpreted as symbolic cultural interactions that carry meanings of tolerance and respect, as per Clifford Geertz's theory of cultural meaning as a cultural system (Geertz, 1973).

Pengalangan Village is a portrait of a society that shows the reality of a tolerant, harmonious, and peaceful diversity with inclusive behaviour and attitudes, without selfishly emphasising religious identity and dividing religious followers from one another. This inclusive attitude becomes the capital and medium for each individual in establishing social relationships with other residents in Pengalangan Village. The roots of this inclusive community in Pengalangan can be traced back to the educational patterns of their children from an early age, starting from preschool and primary school.

At the Dharma Wanita Persatuan Kindergarten and Pengalangan Public Elementary School, the community of Pengalangan began to come together across religious lines. Parents and students from diverse religious backgrounds in Pengalangan Village gathered and socialised. The children of Pengalangan Village began to get to know their peers of different faiths, learning to respect their religious identities without mocking them. The role of teachers at the kindergarten and primary school is fundamental in shaping children into tolerant and inclusive individuals. Teachers began teaching tolerant attitudes to the children and parents of Pengalangan. They also taught good behaviour to their students, such as adhering to religious practices according to their respective faiths, respecting parents and elders, maintaining good communication and relationships with peers, and so on.

Furthermore, some teachers who are aware of the religious diversity in Pengalangan Village and the importance of living in harmony always strive to exemplify tolerant attitudes in the learning process at school. They consistently incorporate values of religious tolerance into the children's education during lessons. This is done to cultivate an understanding and attitude of religious pluralism and tolerance from a young age, so that when the children grow up, they will have religious habits and attitudes that are not rigid, radical, or similar. Thus, it is hoped that the children will continue the tradition of diversity that respects and honours followers of other religions as they grow into adults and parents (Nadiroh, 2023).

Kinship Factors from a Sociological and Anthropological Perspective: Social Capital, Harmony, and Inclusive Da'wah

The portrait of the growth and development of inclusivity in the Pengalangan Village community did not arise solely from formal structural constructs, but rather from another factor that played a major role and was

deeply rooted: the social kinship network that had been built up over several generations. Kinship in this context is not only understood genealogically but also culturally and symbolically, where relationships between individuals are shaped by values of mutual aid, mutual respect, and an awareness of shared local historical origins. The intense familial and neighbourly relationships between Muslim and Hindu residents in this village create a socially flexible space that accommodates differences in faith.

Through a phenomenological approach, an exploration of the subjective experiences of residents shows that the emotional bonds between extended families (including between in-laws, relatives by marriage, and distant relatives) transcend religious boundaries. A Hindu informant, Suamah, a coffee seller in Pengalangan Village, stated that '*here, even though we pray differently, we are one family, one destiny, one birthplace.*' (Interview with Suamah, owner of a coffee shop in Pengalangan. January 30, 2025). This statement shows how kinship values can reduce exclusive identity barriers based on religion.

This social capital is also reflected in various daily practices such as participation in interfaith family rituals (kenduri, tahlilan, or ngaben ceremonies), collaboration in community economic activities, and solidarity in times of disaster. Within this social configuration, da'wah is not conducted in a confrontational manner but through the example of life (bi al-hal) filled with empathy and respect for the existence of other beliefs. In this context, inclusive da'wah is not merely a concept but a living social practice embedded in the daily lives of the community. From a theoretical perspective, this phenomenon is relevant to the theory of 'cohesive communities,' where social integration is formed through inclusive and egalitarian interpersonal relationships (Putnam, 2001).

Pengalangan Village demonstrates that diversity does not always lead to conflict but can become the basis for social cohesion when supported by fluid kinship networks and tolerant local values. Strong internal family ties (bonding social capital) strengthen local group solidarity, while openness to relatives of different religions (bridging social capital) expands social networks that bridge different groups in a spirit of inclusiveness. For example, in many large families, interfaith relationships between in-laws or siblings-in-law are socially accepted without significant resistance. This phenomenon shows that religious identity is not a clear social boundary in the local kinship system. Instead, local values such as rukun tangga, mutual assistance in traditional ceremonies, and participation in collective work (kerja bakti) have stronger legitimacy than religious-based segregation. From a sociological perspective, this shows that the social structure in Pengalangan Village does not place religion as a source of identity conflict, but rather as a symbolic resource that supports social integration. Religion becomes part of social norms that coexist, not hegemonic. Dakwah in such a society is not verbal-doctrinal in nature, but rather symbolic and practical, transmitted through work ethic, social concern, and tolerant attitudes in public spaces. This context aligns with the cultural dakwah model proposed by KH. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), where dakwah is a process of sowing values, not imposing doctrines (Barton, 2006).

Furthermore, from Edmund Husserl's phenomenological approach, the intersubjective experience between religious communities in this village indicates the existence of a shared stock of knowledge that enables cooperative social action without the need for continuous identity negotiation. In the residents' narrative, living side by side is not something extraordinary, but rather 'the normal way of being human.' (Dahlan, 2010).

Living Dakwah Inclusiveness: The Manifestation of Islamic Values in Interfaith Social Relations

Similar to the concepts of living hadith and living Qur'an, living dakwah can be understood as a form of non-verbal dakwah, dakwah that is manifested in social piety, respect for diversity, and the formation of peaceful relations between religious communities. Living dakwah is a practice of dakwah that emerges from the daily lives of Muslims as they interact with their social environment, without always involving formal religious communication, not dependent on specific actors or figures, but emphasising the values of individual exemplary behaviour, social goodness, and cooperation across identities. The concept of living dakwah in the context of a multicultural society such as Pengalangan Village does not merely mean formal dakwah activities, but rather the internalisation and embodiment of Islamic values in everyday social actions.

Based on an interview with Mohammad Husnan Shofi, an informant who is one of the Islamic religious leaders in Pengalangan Village, one of the important aspects of inclusive dakwah practice is, first, exemplary behaviour. Local Muslim stakeholders are able to build harmonious relationships with Hindu religious leaders. In various village social events such as the opening of the people's market or the celebration of Indonesia's Independence Day, Islamic and Hindu religious leaders are seen joking, greeting, and interacting closely in front of the general public (Interview with Husnan Shofi). Such exemplary behaviour is highly relevant to the concept

of uswah hasanah (good example) as explained by Abdul Karim Zaidan in Ushulud Dakwah. According to him, a preacher must demonstrate behaviour that reflects Islamic values in a practical way, because the most powerful form of da'wah is through exemplary behaviour that moves the heart (Zaidan, 1981).

Second, through the internalisation of inclusive Islamic values in society through religious forums. Husnan Shofi added that in regular events held by the Pengalangan branch of Jam'iyah Nahdlatul Ulama, such as lailatul ijtima', invited preachers are always instructed to emphasise the importance of maintaining religious harmony as part of Islamic teachings in their sermons. These da'wah messages emphasise that doing good to followers of other religions is a manifestation of the value of ihsan and part of the implementation of the principle of rahmatan lil 'alamin. This aligns with the thoughts of Al-Bayanuni, who stated that effective da'wah includes the elements of tatsqif (enlightenment), ta'lim (teaching), and taujih (moral guidance) delivered in a calm manner that respects the reality of the da'wah audience (mad'u) (Al-Bayanuni, 1990). This inclusive approach is evident in everyday practices, such as avoiding symbolic conflicts that often arise in pluralistic societies. For example, Muslims do not offer products containing beef to Hindus, or during the Nyepi holiday, Muslims do not use loudspeakers for the adhan. This demonstrates a deep understanding of the beliefs of other communities and a genuine effort to avoid friction. From a sociological perspective on religion, this reflects the form of social cohesion as described by Émile Durkheim, where social solidarity can be built in communities that share a collective awareness of common values, including tolerance (Durkheim, 1997). This also intersects with Paulo Freire's idea in Pedagogy of the Oppressed, that social change begins with dialogue and participation, not discourse domination (Freire, 2005). In the context of a pluralistic village like Pengalangan, dialogue does not always take the form of ideological discussion, but is manifested in working together, social empathy, and neighbourly solidarity. Third, the practice of inclusive da'wah is manifested in the use of dialogue as a mechanism for conflict prevention. According to Husnan Shofi, when there is potential for conflict, such as a lecture by a preacher that could potentially offend the beliefs of Hindus, Islamic religious leaders immediately clarify the matter through open dialogue with the preacher and involve Hindu leaders. This practice shows that dialogue is the key to building healthy communication between religious communities. This approach is in line with the principles of preventive and participatory dakwah, and demonstrates a collective awareness of the importance of social stability.

These field findings indicate that villagers have developed a tacit understanding regarding the boundaries and scope of interfaith cooperation. Islamic preaching in this context takes the form of social exemplary behaviour (*uswah hasanah*), rather than ideological conversion. This practice is in line with the principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which positions Islam as a blessing that embraces all groups, not just Muslims. In the view of local Islamic religious leaders, as expressed by Syahrowi, da'wah does not have to be through sermons or mass recitations, but can be through 'gentle speech, good deeds, and an attitude that unites, not divides.' This statement shows that inclusive living da'wah is an adaptive strategy that is contextual to the social structure of a pluralistic society.

Phänomenologically, residents feel that harmonious living is part of social piety rooted in Islamic ethics. One Muslim resident who served as a research informant, Rozikin, stated: "What's important is that we understand each other and help one another. Religious matters are personal and individual acts of worship." (Interview with Rozikin, a young man from Pengalangan Village, who works at the Cakrindo Factory. February 20, 2025). This perspective shows how religious life is healthily separated from social life, without stripping the religious meaning from interpersonal relationships (Dahlan, 2010). From a cultural anthropology perspective, inclusive da'wah strategies in Pengalangan Village reflect local value systems that have been internalised in people's lives. Practices such as the provision of sacrificial meat that does not contain cows to Hindu neighbours or the participation of Muslims in temple construction show that religious diversity has become part of the local culture. Clifford Geertz in his theory of religion and cultural meaning asserts that religious meaning is not only found in doctrine, but in cultural symbols and social practices that are lived daily (Geertz, 1973). The Pengalangan Village community has succeeded in interpreting religious teachings inclusively through these social symbols.

Thus, the inclusive da'wah model applied in Pengalangan Village combines religious, sociological and anthropological approaches. Exemplary religious leaders, internalisation of Islamic values in da'wah forums, and a dialogical approach in responding to potential conflicts are strategic combinations that can form a moderate and tolerant Muslim community. This model can be an example of the application of da'wah that not

only conveys Islamic teachings, but also strengthens social ties and maintains the integrity of the nation amid religious diversity.

Anticipating Future Challenges

While the findings in Pengalangan Village highlight a harmonious and inclusive interfaith reality, it is necessary to acknowledge potential challenges that could arise in the future. Social harmony is not a static achievement but a dynamic process that requires continuous negotiation. For instance, the influence of transnational religious movements with exclusive interpretations could penetrate rural communities and shift the moderate pattern of local da'wah. If not anticipated, this could potentially disrupt the balance that has been built over generations.

Another challenge lies in generational change. Younger generations who are increasingly exposed to global media and digital platforms may adopt rigid or intolerant views that differ from the lived experiences of their parents and grandparents. This digital exposure could lead to identity politics or the strengthening of exclusive religious boundaries. Therefore, inclusive da'wah in Pengalangan must adapt to the digital era, where narratives of tolerance and social solidarity are actively disseminated to counter intolerant discourses. As Patel (2022) emphasises in his work on interfaith cooperation, strengthening diversity requires creating digital and physical spaces where youth can practice inclusive values in everyday life.

Finally, socio-economic changes such as urbanisation, industrialisation, and migration also pose challenges. The entry of new residents with different social backgrounds could reshape the social fabric and test the resilience of inclusive traditions. To address these dynamics, the da'wah model in Pengalangan needs to emphasise not only local cultural values but also integrate broader frameworks of interfaith dialogue and religious peacebuilding. Abu-Nimer (2021) highlights that interfaith dialogue is most effective when it goes beyond theological debates and focuses on building collaborative social action. Likewise, religious peacebuilding frameworks (Sampson, 2021) stress that sustainable harmony requires mechanisms of conflict prevention, active engagement of religious leaders, and institutionalisation of inclusive practices. In this way, the inclusive practices in Pengalangan Village are not only preserved but also capable of responding to future complexities.

CONCLUSION

The practice of da'wah in Pengalangan is not present in the form of normative invitations that impose certain beliefs, but in the format of living da'wah, where Islamic values such as compassion, honesty, and justice, are transmitted through social behaviour in interfaith relations. Inclusive da'wah in Pengalangan Village is incarnated as an ethic of life in diversity. In the context of Pengalangan Village, living inclusive da'wah is characterised by firstly, the active involvement of Muslims in interfaith social activities (such as gotong royong, Hindu family events, and joint village resource management). Second, the avoidance of religious exclusivism practices that can trigger polarisation. Third, exemplary social behaviour such as honesty, empathy and social responsibility. Fourth, Willingness to build family relationships with residents of different faiths.

The da'wah model applied also involves internalising inclusive values through religious forums, where preachers convey messages of tolerance and the importance of maintaining religious harmony. In addition, interfaith dialogue is an important strategy to prevent potential conflicts, so that people can manage differences constructively and maintain harmonious social stability. With a multidisciplinary approach that combines religious, sociological and anthropological aspects, the inclusive da'wah model in Pengalangan Village does not only function as a means of spreading the teachings of Islam, but also as a means of promoting religious tolerance.

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