

## TYPES OF *DA`WAH* COMMUNICATION USED BY *DA`WAH* WORKERS IN CONVEYING THE MESSAGE OF ISLAM TO THE ABORIGINALS

Zulkefli bin Aini, Nur Damia Husna binti Nor Sad

Department of Dakwah and Leadership Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies,  
The National University of Malaysia  
[zulaini@ukm.edu.my](mailto:zulaini@ukm.edu.my)

**Abstract:** *Da`wah* communication is the process of conveying information about Islam by a muslim communicator to the recipient in order to achieve a certain objective that is in line with what is outlined in al-Quran and al-Sunnah. In the effort to develop an effective *da`wah* communication, mastering the types of dakwah communication is imperative in ensuring the continuation of its messages. This is an addition to other factors that help contribute to the success of *da`wah* such as the aspects of preparation, expertise, skills and the mastery of the *da`wah* workers when they engage with the target group. Therefore, this study aims to identify the types of *da`wah* communication used by the *da`wah* workers in order to convey the *da`wah* messages to the target group which is the aboriginal (Orang Asli) community. This qualitative study utilizes the case study design. Eight *da`wah* workers from Penggerak Masyarakat Orang Asli (PMOA) and Panel Dakwah Muallaf (PDM) in Selangor and a research informant are chosen for interviews. The data are organised and coded based on the themes and categories obtained from the complete transcription. Then, the data are analyzed descriptively. The findings show that there are three initial processes used by *da`wah* workers in developing the types of *da`wah* communication. It involves the initiation stage, planning as well as the preparation to begin a conversation on a certain topic when communicating with the Orang Asli. In order to ensure effective communication, the *da`wah* worker is not only applying verbal communication, but also non-verbal communication in order to open the channel of communication for *da`wah*. All the three stages influence the efficacy of the *da`wah* messages presented and give a positive impact towards the Orang Asli community. The implication of this study is on the stakeholders i.e. the organizations that have close relations to the Orang Asli like Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM), states' religious councils like Majlis Agama Islam Selangor (MAIS) and non-government organizations (NGOs) within the scope of improving the quality of *da`wah* and indirectly improving the quality of the use of language among *da`wah* workers in communicating the message of *da`wah* to the Orang Asli community.

**Key words:** *Da`wah*, communication, Islam, Aborigines, Orang Asli

### Introduction

In Islam, the term used to introduce and spread the divine message to others is called *da`wah*. The person who undertakes the work of *da`wah* is called as *da`i*. However in this article the term used for *da`i* or caller of Islamic message is *da`wah* workers. According to Sohirin (2008), the work of *da`wah* is focused on calling others into the religion, worship, and offering love to God. Beside that, *da`wah* work is an effort that requires the strife of energy, intellect and material in order to achieve a particular objective. It calls for determination on the part of *da`wah* workers to engage the target audience using a particular method or approach. However *da`wah* work is not an easy job as approved by Syed Abdurrahman (2008) because it deals with the matter of altering the belief and understanding of a human being. Thus this agrees with the meaning of *da`wah* as proposed by al-Bahi al-Khawli (1979) that the *da`wah* movement attempts to lift a person out from an environment and put him into another. This is in line with the view presented by Mohd. Amin Abdul Rahim (2010) who states that *da`wah* work requires for *da`wah* workers who are committed to carry out the effort full time and it is not an easy task. The explanation for this is that the *da`wah* workers must engage with the target group from all kinds of backgrounds i.e. different beliefs, customs and levels of education and thinking. All these according to `Abd Allah Nasih `Ulwan (1985), need for a *da`wah* worker who is wholly prepared in terms of knowledge, physical and spiritual. Besides that, the main challenge to an effective *da`wah* work comes from the *da`wah* workers themselves whereby the way they present themselves and the approach that they apply to interact with the target group play a crucial role. Therefore, according to Mohamad Natsir (1978), the best approach is the approach inspired from the Quranic verse (surah al-Nahl 125) that focuses on the approach of *al-hikmah*, *al-maw`izah al-hasanah* and *al-mujadalah bi al-husna*.

Mohd. Amin Abdul Rahim (2010) states that there are six factors that contribute to the acceptance of the target group towards the *da`wah* messages. These factors are the management and administration of *da`wah*, attitude of the recipient of *da`wah*, the conscience of the *da`wah* worker that is not easily influenced, imbalanced emotional state and wrong delivery technique. There are two causes why the target group resists the *da`wah* brought to them and these include the target group's background and their attitude towards the *da`wah*. In the context of the recipient's attitude, a few reasons contribute to the recipient's refusal to accept the *da`wah* and these reasons being the incongruity between the message and the values, the attitude and belief of the recipients as well as apathy and scepticism towards the message brought by the *da`wah* workers. This is because they assume that the messages brought to them do not have anything to do with their needs and interests. Among the consequences of this is that they either take a neutral stand or totally reject the messages if there arises any doubt. Meanwhile, the image presented by the *da`wah* workers will have a bearing on whether the *da`wah* is accepted or rejected. This involves the credibility and expertise of the *da`wah* workers and their competency in delivering the message, their commitments towards the message and the recipients, the sincerity and honesty of the *da`wah* workers in carrying out their duties and also their dynamism and agility when they are on the ground engaging their target audience.

In the context of *da`wah* to Orang Asli, according to Syed Abdurahman (2008) there are three main obstacles that become the cause as to why *da`wah* reaches orang Asli in a sluggish manner. Firstly, the *da`wah* workers themselves are the obstacle, then the obstacle from the target group and finally the obstacle from external entities. From the side of the *da`wah* workers, there is a shortage of capable, talented, skilful and competent *da`wah* workers to carry out the *da`wah* work. This is confirmed by Ramlee (2015) who states that a major part of the problem faced by the *da`wah* workers is related to their skills in conveying the message of *da`wah*. Meanwhile Hood Salleh (1991) adds other problems faced by the *da`wah* workers are they do not equip themselves with the basic information about their career, they lack in motivation in getting acquainted with their audience which leads to their lack in eagerness to carry out the *da`wah* work, in addition to that the effort of the missionary workers that does not receive support from the local community especially the Malay community who majority of them do things which are deemed anti-social by the target group (Orang Asli) and finally the missionary workers are ill prepared in terms of character management where they are seen as being arrogant.

## Research Methodology

This qualitative study utilizes the case study design. Data collection for this study involves eight research participants and also an informant while semi-structured interview method is used as the research instrument. The research subjects are the *da`wah* workers who are directly involved in the *da`wah* to the Orang Asli community in Selangor, Malaysia from two entities that call themselves Penggerak Masyarakat Orang Asli (PMOA) and Panel Dakwah Muallaf (PDM). In this particular writing, the term used that indicates *da`wah workers* as PK or *Peserta Kajian* (in English we called them as subject matter). Purposive sampling is used in the process of research sample selection. The pilot study is conducted in order to increase the level of reliability of the interview questions constructed. Based on Cohen Kappa's estimation it indicates that the level of reliability achieved should be 1.0, that is, it is in the highest wrung of the indicator. The data analysis process is done by organizing the findings according to themes and sections which have been constructed for every question that answers the research objectives.

## Types of Communication in *Da`wah*

The process of *da`wah* takes place when the *da`wah* workers communicate with the *da`wah* target group in order to convey the message of *da`wah* (Toto Tasmara, 1997). Thus, *da`wah* workers must use the type of communication that is suitable for a communicator in order to influence and steer the acceptance of the message by the the recipient based on what is stipulated in the Islamic rules and regulations. When the *da`wah* workers choose the suitable type of communication that suits the recipients' state, it is a way to ease the process of providing understanding about the message that is to be conveyed (Asep Syamsul 2013). Type of communication used is not restricted to verbal communication only, but also non-verbal. Added to this is usage of the written form and the situational language that can ensure that the *da`wah* message conveyed can be well accepted and understood by the recipients (Zulkefli & S. Salahudin 2016).

As an example, in the context of verbal communication the communication process happens when the *da`wah* workers use a specific language medium to convey the message of *da`wah* to the recipient through verbal medium like public speaking, sermon, dialogue and discussion. This agrees with what is stated in al-Quran (Verse Ibrahim: 4) where Allah says “We sent not a Messenger except (to teach) in the language of his (own) people, in order to make (things) clear to them. Now Allah leaves straying those whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases: and He is Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom.” According to al-Qaradawi (2011) this Quranic verse does not only mention the type and medium of language of the communicator like English and German. It also gives the focus on the function and role of language in verbal communication. As an example, when a person communicates with the public he/ she tends to use the colloquial language in order to suit the public’s level of thinking. In relation to that, in order to create the verbal communication guideline, Zulkefli and S.Salahudin (2016) propose that the following ethics that should be taken as a procedure in verbal communications like: the topic of conversation between the communicator and the recipient should be about something that is good and beneficial, the communicator avoids saying things that are not beneficial, he/ she is truthful in his/ her words, he/ she does not expose other people’s weaknesses, he/ she does not say bad things and look down on others and finally he/ she observes the ethics when differing in views with others.

Meanwhile situational communication refers to the *da`wah* workers’ effort to communicate with the recipients using an approach that is oriented towards expanding and developing the community within a specific sector like economy and education (Zulkefli & S.Salahudin 2016). Through this type of communication, the *da`wah* message is conveyed in a “silent” manner by way of doing good deeds in the form of community activities and also development until they are capable of influencing the target group and it is more effective compared to the message that is conveyed verbally for example through talks and speeches (Kustadi 2013). *Da`wah* workers act as the agent of change for the community in order to help them increase their quality of life in certain fields like in economy. According to Mohd. Yusof Hussain (2009) among the roles and functions of the *da`wah* workers are helping the community to identify their needs deemed suitable, to get the support from the leader and members of community in carrying out the community development project, to help the community carry out the project, to provide the necessary expertise to the members of the community, to provide them with the motivation, to become their source of reference to ensure that the project is properly done and to help in making the evaluation of the project planned or the project that is being carried out.

## Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study show that when communicating with the Orang Asli Community, the *da`wah* workers from PMOA and PDM mainly use verbal communication that is made up of three levels in their effort to build the rapport with the Orang Asli for *da`wah* purposes. The levels mentioned are referring to the initial process to build the rapport, strategy, topics of conversation that will lead up to the *da`wah* communication with the Orang Asli being formed.

### 1. The Initial Process in Developing the Communication Form for *Da`wah*

The research finding shows that PK 1 until PK 8 are in agreement that Bahasa Melayu (i.e an official language used by Malaysian) is the medium of communication used when communicating with Orang Asli. For them, it is the initial step in order to begin the process of communication with Orang Asli. Based on the interview it is found out that the *da`wah* workers use verbal communication in order to establish the line of communication between the them and the Orang Asli. This is the form of verbal communication used by God’s Messenger when he was conveying the message of truth to his people as narrated in Al-Quran (Verse Ibrahim: 4).

Jumiya’s (2014) study however discovers that the mastery of Bahasa Melayu among Orang Asli is very low and they have difficulties to understand it. Meanwhile, a research finding proves that the Orang Asli community in Selangor are able to communicate and understand Bahasa Melayu in in their daily life. Moreover, a study by Rohani & Noor Hasnur (2014) finds out that Bahasa Melayu and Melayu-Proto (language used by one of Orang Asli group) have similarity in dialect. This is because it is made up of cognate features and phonological system in the language used. This means that the terms used give the same meaning and are easily understood. More clearly, the statement by Muhammad Busu (2016) who says that the usage of terms in the language of, especially, the Orang Asli Temuan community is very similar to the usage in Bahasa Melayu used for the purpose of communication.

Besides using Bahasa Melayu as a medium of interaction, PK 6 also opines that as a person who does *da`wah* work, the “friendly face” skill must be possessed by the *da`wah* worker in order to ease the process of communicating with the Orang Asli. He explains that the “friendly face” skill can be explained as for instance always giving away a smile, greeting another Muslim with “Assalamualaikum” or greeting with “selamat sejahtera” and “good morning” for the non-Muslims. This effort is an early sign of building a cordial relationship with the Orang Asli community.

The research finding shows that effort shown by the *da`wah* worker is in line with Mc Auley’s (1988) statement that facial expression, eyes and body movement can have a big influence in communication. This suggests that the missionary workers must also apply the non-verbal communication process in their effort to build the rapport with the Orang Asli. This is in line with Marlyna Maros & Mohd. Baharim’s (2011) research finding that greeting is an early move to develop a communication between two parties. It is also found out from the study that there are two aspects of greeting i.e. verbal greeting and non-verbal greeting. Verbal greeting involves communication such as saying hello and non-verbal greeting involves communication with body language like smiling.

Besides the usage of Bahasa Melayu and the “friendly face” skill, the study also shows that there is a similarity in the views of PK 3, PK 5, and PK 8 that is the *da`wah* workers must learn about the background and lifestyle of Orang Asli. This approach is important in order to create a harmonious and friendly surrounding between them and the Orang Asli community. The finding also indicates that there should be effort on the part of the *da`wah* workers to learn about the life of the Orang Asli like the work they do and their daily activities. This shows that they are genuinely interested to get acquainted with the Orang Asli. In fact, the interview with the informant shows that the *da`wah* workers should not create a gap between themselves and the Orang Asli because it is feared it can lead to a negative impact on the *da`wah* process. The following is what the informant says about this:

“First, first impression means we must have adequate preparation. The preparation when entering the Orang Asli village has to be in terms of mental, emotion and knowledge. Knowledge is the most important... When we communicate with the Orang Asli, it has to be that we already have information and knowledge about them... when we form a gap from the very beginning, we have already failed”.

(Informant 1: 2-26)

This includes the aspects of lifestyle, food, occupation, customs and culture of the community. The knowledge about the Orang Asli’s background is important in order to help the *da`wah* workers to easily understand the Orang Asli’s life in more detail. As an example, Ramlee Abdullah et al.’s (2014) study proves that the jungle is considered like a ‘bank’ for the Orang Asli where in it is kept the livelihood of the Orang Asli community. In line with this Haliza (2010) also finds that the Orang Asli community observe the ethics when they deal with the mother nature. In the study it is proven that their belief, practice and way of life encourage them to take care of the forest and the environment. Siti Aminah’s (2015) study also finds that Orang Asli have a strong belief that the forest is the main source of livelihood and it will continue to provide sustenance to the Orang Asli from generation to generation. Looking at the function of the forest, it is transpired in the life of Orang Asli. Therefore, missionary workers must understand this phenomenon and understand also the reason why they are overwhelmingly reliant on the forest.

In the communication process, Zulkefli & S. Salahuddin (2016) explain that this is the first thing to consider before planning to do *da`wah* work. In other words the *da`wah* workers have done prior research and obtain the information about the life and lifestyle of the Orang Asli community before they embark on the *da`wah*. This is in line with the statement by Muhammad Sholikhin (2013) who says that in the context of *da`wah*, the *da`wah* workers must take into consideration the aspect of the community that is multi-ethnic in nature in order to ensure that the communication process is effective. Zulkefli et al. (2014) states that this method is an inter-cultural *da`wah* communication process i.e. the effort of the *da`wah* workers to understand the culture of their *mad`u* (i.e. those who become a target group as well as a receiver of the message of *da`wah* from *da`wah* worker).

The conclusion is that at the initial stage to form *da`wah* communication it involves the communication methods (used by the *da`wah* workers) which are verbal and non-verbal. The verbal communication of the *da`wah* workers can be seen when they greet the Orang Asli with “salam”, the wish of “selamat sejahtera” or “greetings to all”, and when they are shaking hands with them. Meanwhile the non-verbal communication is referring to the facial

expressions of the *da`wah* workers that is they smile when they are meeting the Orang Asli. In line with Zawiyah's (2009) statement that says facial expressions are a person's non-verbal language that can give out all sorts of meaning in its delivery. Therefore, the *da`wah* workers' effort to learn the socio-cultural aspect and the lifestyle of the Orang Asli community is important because the language that is used in the process of communication is capable of influencing the feelings of the the Orang Asli community.

## 2. The Strategy in Initiating the Communication Form for *Da`wah*

Fariza et al. (2000) explains that the preparation involves the process of identifying the goals, the target group, challenges to be encountered and strategies used by the *da`wah* workers in achieving the *da`wah* mission. In their effort to form *da`wah* communication, Ab. Aziz (2001) explains that *da`wah* delivery covers two components. The components are the methodology and the strategy that suits the target group. It is explained further that the *da`wah* workers must know what the content of the *da`wah* is so that it can suit the method of delivering the *da`wah* message. Similarly, Amien Wibowo (2015) too explains that the planning is also part of the strategy of *da`wah* communication in order to achieve the objective of spreading the message of Islam.

The finding from the study also reveals that PK 1 also makes a strategy by introducing the concept of 'Mentor Mentee' to the Orang Asli community. PK 1 explains that a *da`wah* worker must consider himself/ herself as a 'Mentor' when conveying the *da`wah*. However, the 'Mentor' that is meant here does not have the complete authority to control the Orang Asli community. On the flip side, they workers must always be prepared and be cautious with every action that they take.

Meanwhile for PK 4 the strategy used is by getting acquainted with the people who have strong influence in the Orang Asli community for example the Tok Batin, village head and the Village Security and Development Committee (the term used among Malaysian is *Jawatankuasa Kemajuan Keselamatan Kampung* or JKKK). He explains that if the *da`wah* workers have a good relationship with this group of people, their presence in the village is more welcomed by the people there. Furthermore, the local inhabitants are more willing to accept what is said by the *da`wah* worker when they see that the Tok Batin or Orang Asli village headmen, and JKKK welcome the presence of the *da`wah* worker. This kind of effort eases the work of the *da`wah* worker in building the communication and relationship with the locals. Ma'rof & Sarjit (2008) explain that the village head of Orang Asli is appointed through two ways i.e. inheritance and appointment. The selection is done depending on the credibility of the individual in the Orang Asli community. Thus, the strategy of approaching the influential people in the community is necessary because in the study (Johari & Nazri 2006; Colin et al. 2010) it is found that the Orang Asli practice the obedience system in their daily life. This kind of lifestyle has become the practice from generation to generation and it is their ancestral tradition. Therefore, this situation makes the position of the Tok Batin one who is respected and constantly becomes the source of reference of the local people.

Besides that, the research finding also shows that the *da`wah* workers strategize in terms of lexical choice and the content of conversation when communicating with the Orang Asli community. This is agreed by PK 1, PK 2, PK 3, PK 6 and PK 8 who also add that besides being cautious with the lexical choice and the content of conversation, ethics and manners of the *da`wah* worker are also important in influencing and inviting Orang Asli to get closer to Islam. The research finding explains that the wearing of *jubah* (robe) is not suitable when entering the Orang Asli village. This is because it can make the Orang Asli feel uncomfortable. This is in line with Juli Edo's (1988) study that indicates that the influence and believe towards the supernatural power shapes the social life of the Orang Asli and this covers values, attitudes and personality, taboos and customs. In addition to that Mohammad Aslam et al.'s (2004) study shows that the strong belief moulds the community's culture. The factor of holding on to the customs and culture exposes the character and social life of the Orang Asli who are always careful in life. Therefore, it is not strange to see that the Orang Asli community are concerned about ethics to ensure that they will not do anything that is against their customs and culture that is integral in their life.

In addition to that, the research finding also indicates that PK 5 and PK 7 make a preparation by attending related courses to learn the languages of the Orang Asli. Even though the Orang Asli community in Selangor are able to understand and to speak in Bahasa Melayu, the *da`wah* workers' capability to master the language of the orang Asli gives them a positive image among the Orang Asli. The study by Sa'adiah (2014) finds that the Che Wong tribe that is made up of groups of Orang Asli from the Senoi community use their own language more when

they are communicating among themselves as compared to using Bahasa Melayu. The same thing is also found in Zuriatunfadzlia et al.'s (2009) study shows that the Bateq tribe are still not affected by changes especially in terms of language even though they are experiencing cultural changes due to the emergence of eco-tourism. The research finding shows that the preservation of the usage of the Orang Asli language is through the communication link with family members, neighbours and the people in the community. This indicates that they are preserving their language identity even though their population is small and they are only a minority people. The need for a *da`wah* worker to learn the Orang Asli languages, even only minimally, is necessary because with the language it gives an advantage to the *dakwah* workers when they want to engage the Orang Asli (Halim & Zulkefli, 2014).

From the aspect of planning to build a communication connection with the Orang Asli, the research finding shows the various efforts done by the *da`wah* workers to get closer to the Orang Asli community. The efforts are through the practice of mentor-mentee concept in learning, the effort to approach the influential individuals in the Orang Asli community, the strategy of choosing the words to be used in the content of conversation, the observance of ethics and appropriate manners as a *da`wah* worker and finally attending related courses to learn the language of the Orang Asli. In the context of *da`wah*, Bassamul 'Umush (2005) says that it is a process (التأليف قبل التعريف or winning the heart of *mad'u* first before explaining the Islamic terminologies) of trying to learn about the background of the *mad'u* in much detail in order to get to know them a lot better.

### 3. Types of Topics of Conversation in *Da`wah* Communication

al-Bayanuni (2010) explains that the tenets of *da`wah* is basically made up of three aspects which are *da'ie*, *mad'u* and *mawdu'* (content) of *da`wah*. In the aspect of *mawdu'* of *dakwah*, it is explained that it discusses all aspects that relate to *da`wah*, *aqidah* (belief) and *syariah* (Islamic law). According to Asep (2013) the content of *da`wah* refers to the information and messages that invite human to accept the *syariah*. It is further explained that the discussion process carried out will create a form of *da`wah* communication between the *da`wah* worker as the source of information and the target group as the recipient of the message. Therefore, as the outcome of the interviews with the *da`wah* workers it shows that the topic of conversation in this study can be divided into two aspects i.e. *da`wah* knowledge and general knowledge.

#### i. Knowledge of *Da`wah*

The knowledge of *da`wah* is the knowledge and information that leads man to the way of Allah (Kustadi, 2013). It is further explained that knowledge is divided into two i.e. *da`wah* knowledge and general knowledge. Meanwhile, according to Sohirin (2008), the knowledge of *da`wah* that is also known as the science of *da`wah* can be defined as knowledge which through it can be known the means of conviction and whether the means is in the form of sayings such as preaching and teaching or lecturing or the means in the form of behaviour such as giving good example, beneficial work, as well as the good account of life. However, in this study, the knowledge of *da`wah* refers to the content of *da`wah* itself that delivered by the *da`wah* workers to their *mad'u*. Therefore, in this study, the result of the interviews reveal that PK 1, PK 2 and PK 6 explains that the Orang Asli community are very likely to ask about one thing that they consider difficult to do for example *solat* (prayers), *wudhu* (ablution), fasting and *khitan* (circumcision). These practices are considered difficult to adopt considering the lifestyle of Orang Asli who never practiced them before they learned about Islam. Mohd Nizam & Che Zarrina's (2005) study also identifies the push factors among the Orang Asli that make them difficult to accept acts of worship like *khitan* (circumcision), fasting, halal diet and difference in culture also contributes to this. They find it difficult to perform acts of worship because they are not used to them as they have never done them before. This situation makes them distance themselves from Islam because they consider it as a burden in life.

Moreover, the study also discovers that according to PK 4 and PK 5, it is usually the *da`wah* workers who have to initiate the discussion on the topics about Islam when conversing with the Orang Asli. However, the *da`wah* workers explain that they cannot really say whether or not the Orang Asli community truly understand the message of Islam communicated to them. This is due to their attitude that is they prefer to stay silent while the teaching and learning process is carried out. Below is the statement by PK 4:

“...in my experience teaching this man, he always keeps silent. When we ask him whether he understands or not, he replies that he understands .But when we ask him a question he can’t answer. He actually doesn’t understand. What it means here is that he is just imitating what we say”.

(PK 4: 53-59)

Nazariyah’s (2014) study finds that the character of the Orang Asli children, the environment, diet, interests, education and parents’ influence are shaping their attitude that is one that does not pay attention to matters pertaining to religion and also education in their daily life. Because of this they do not want to ask questions and as a consequence the *da`wah* workers are not sure whether the message conveyed is understood or not. The research finding also shows that the same sentiment is shared by PK 8 who portrays the Orang Asli as merely ‘passengers’ in their class. The following is the statement:

“...There are those who are merely passengers in the class. Well, they listen only. Whether they understand or not they don’t seem to show. It’s impossible for us to understand them. We do not know whether they understand or not. We know that they are shy and if there is anyone among them that might ask questions, he or she must be someone with a career (i.e. has education). What we tell them they understand, but when we ask them back they cannot answer”.

(PK 8:133-137)

However, refusal to ask questions is not something strange when it comes to conveying *da`wah* to Orang Asli. This attitude is synonymous with the Orang Asli community. Based on the research by Doris et al. (2012) it is found that the Orang Asli community are imbued with prejudice due to their natural character that is shy and they have low self-esteem when they are around outsiders. Besides that, the study by Mohd Johdi et al. (2009) finds that the level of awareness among Orang Asli is still low. This is due to a few factors like attitude, family and their surroundings. As a result of this, as discovered in Abdul Sukor et al.’s (2011) study that shows the Orang Asli community has weak memory and this causes them unable to master the 3M skills i.e. writing, reading and arithmetic. These factors stop them from asking about something or from being curious about Islam.

The research finding tells the experience of the *da`wah* workers in their effort to approach this group and it has been discovered that the main factors as to why it is difficult to communicate the message of *da`wah* to the orang Asli are their shyness and low self-esteem. According to the *da`wah* workers, these factors make them reluctant to ask questions although the *da`wah* message conveyed is not clearly understood by them. This is in line with the finding of the study conducted by Ahmad et al. (2009) that shows Orang Asli are known to have shy and modest character. Doris (2012) explains that Orang Asli do not freely expose themselves in public and because of that they are prejudiced towards the general public. W.A Amir Zal’s (2013) study calls this ‘social capitalisme’ that is they have community connection according to their own way of life.

## ii. General Knowledge

Unlike matters related to general knowledge, the issues of assistance, welfare and the behaviour of the Muslim community constantly become the main questions asked by Orang Asli to the *da`wah* workers. From the study it is found that PK 3, PK 6, PK 7 and PK 8 make similar statements that is Orang Asli always question the attitude and the negative actions of the Muslim community. More seriously considering that there are some Muslims who do irresponsible things like stealing, not minding their words, not looking after their manners, drinking, trafficking and pushing drugs, entering the village of Orang Asli without permission, raping and even staying together with Orang Asli women outside of wedlock. All these create a bad image of Muslims among the Orang Asli community. This situation becomes a challenge to the *da`wah* workers who have been given the special task in the Orang Asli villages. The research finding also shows that, based on the statements of the *da`wah* workers, there are some inhabitants who do not welcome the presence of the *da`wah* workers whenever they hear the word “*ustaz*” (religious teacher) being used. This situation explains why it is not something odd to hear Orang Asli have the impression that by being converted to Islam they are also directly being turned into Malay.

In line with the study by Syed Abdurrahman (2009) that finds Orang Asli equate the Malay community with Islam. However, the negative attitude displayed by the Malay community creates a negative perception among

the Orang Asli about Muslims. As a consequence, Orang Asli believe that by being converted to Islam they are becoming Malay (Zulkefli & Halim 2014; Padzal 1997; Ramlee Abdullah 1988).

Besides that, from the research it is also found that the questions asked by the Orang Asli to the *da`wah* workers are characteristically unpredictable. This demands the *da`wah* workers to possess skills to answer the questions and to ensure that the orang Asli are convinced with the the answers given. PK 2 shares the experience concerning the question posed by the Orang Asli to him:

“some examples of the questions: we are old, if we convert to Islam, can we avoid being circumcised? What more we are diabetic... Then, like when I was teaching yesterday, there was one Orang Asli asked me about the different types of crying. Meaning how many types. It was difficult to research and find answer to the question. I answered 10 types of crying. This crying is due to pain, happiness, sadness and crying because one sees another person crying. Can you see that? These questions asked by Orang Asli sometimes are very unpredictable. They are something else”.

(PK 2: 14-27)

The following is the question asked to PK 4 who confesses that he had to really think about what was the most appropriate answer before he gave the answer to the Orang Asli who posed the question:

“Like in the topic about *solat* (prayers) he asked why do we need to first say the intention. Why not start the prayer with *Takbir*? This is common. Maybe he was thinking why it was like that...”.

(PK 4: 78-80)

The same also with the explanation by PK 8 who considers the questions asked are challenging and difficult to answer spontaneously. This is in order to ensure that the answer given is accurate and appropriate, and can be accepted by the Orang Asli community according to their level of understanding:

“When it comes to the topic on death, they’d ask you what the life will be like after death. So it’s quite a challenge to answer , right?”

(PK 8: 35-37)

From the finding of the research, it shows that there are some *da`wah* workers who are not prepared to answer questions posed spontaneously. This is due to they are not able to anticipate the questions asked by the Orang Asli community and because of that they need time to find the answer that can convince the Orang Asli. Therefore, *da`wah* workers must be more prepared when they face with questions from the Orang Asli. *Da`wah* workers’ preparation is important so that every answer they give is true, easy to understand and can be accepted and can convince the Orang Asli community.

## Conclusion

Overall, the research findings show that the types of *da`wah* communication to the Orang Asli community involve three main stages i.e. the initiation stage, strategizing and topics of conversation during communication. Every element has its role and influence that can affect the *da`wah* work carried out by PMOA and PDM towards the Orang Asli community. For *da`wah* workers who are proactive and can perform multiple skills that suit the current situation, their communication with the Orang Asli can lead to something positive and their presence in the village is welcome by the Orang Asli community. However, the *da`wah* workers must be more prepared to answer questions asked by the Orang Asli so that they will accept and can be convinced by every answer given by the *da`wah* workers. The research finding concerning the initiation stage, strategizing and topics of conversation show that *da`wah* workers are utilizing all sorts of methods in order to approach the Orang Asli community. However, every approach taken by PMOA and PDM is different because it must suit the community in which they are doing their *dakwah*. This is because every Orang Asli settlement has certain unique features. Therefore, this situation requires for effort and skills on the part of the *da`wah* workers to learn about the background and lifestyle of the locals.



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