ORIGINAL ARTICLE   *OPEN ACCESS*

THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF THE *DA'I NAGARI* IN DRIVING RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN PASAMAN, WEST SUMATRA

Desi Syafriani*[1] , Muhammad Ridho[2] , Muhiddinur Kamal[3]

*Correspondence:
Email:
desisyafriani06@gmail.com

Authors Affiliation:
[1,2,3]Universitas Islam Negeri Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, *Indonesia*

Abstract

This paper analyzes the strategic role of *Da'i Nagari* (local preacher) as *Da'i* assisting the *nagari* (village) government in driving rural development in Pasaman Regency, West Sumatra. *Da'i Nagari* is a local government－created program that rewards preachers in West Sumatra. This study aims to describe the significant role of *Da'i Nagari* in the development process. This research is critical since *Da'i Nagari* is a specific regional government initiative that only exists in West Sumatra. By providing an overview of the presence of *Da'i Nagari* in Pasaman Barat, this qualitative descriptive study elucidates the role of *Da'i Nagari* in the development process. Additionally, this study addresses academic concerns regarding the potential positive effects of the *Da'i Nagari* program on rural development. The results of this study are revealed by describing *Da'i Nagari* as an extension of the regional government in developing rural communities. The presence of *Da'i Nagari* assists the community in resolving various religious problems, including character building, religious information development, and social issues.

Abstrak

Artikel ini merupakan analisis terhadap peran strategis Da'i Nagari (Da'i lokal) sebagai Da'i pendamping pemerintahan nagari/desa yang ikut berpartisipasi dalam menggerakkan pembangunan pedesaan di kabupaten Pasaman－Sumatera Barat. Da'i Nagari merupakan program khusus yang dibuat oleh pemerintah setempat sebagai bentuk apresiasi kepada para pendakwah di Sumatera Barat. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mendeskripsikan peran penting Da'i Nagari dalam pembangunan. Kajian ini penting mengingat da'i nagari merupakan program khusus pemerintah daerah yang hanya ada di Sumatera Barat. Melalui pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, studi ini mengungkap peran Da'i Nagari dalam pembangunan dengan memberikan gambaran eksistensi Da'i Nagari di Pasaman Barat. Lebih lanjut, studi ini menjawab keresahan akademik tentang apakah program Da'i Nagari memberikan dampak positif dalam pembangunan di pedesaan. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan melalui gambaran eksistensi da'I nagari sebagai perpanjangan tangan dari pemerintah daerah dalam membangun Masyarakat pedesaan. Kehadiran Da'i Nagari membawa kemudahan bagi masyarakat dalam menyelesaikan berbagai permasalahan keagamaan termasuk pembangunan karakter, perkembangan informasi keagamaan hingga permasalahan sosial kemasyarakatan.

INTRODUCTION

Planning and implementing da'wah activities require a systematic effort to ensure optimal management. One effort to find out about the planning and implementation of da'wah is by comprehensively studying the mapping of da'wah. Discovering a person's strength and potential is essential, especially in the realm of da'wah. Da'i and Da'wah organizations are the main targets for analysis because they are both planners and implementers of da'wah activities. Therefore, da'wah activities will be more organized and focused (Basit, 2016).

Da'i is a person who has a very strategic position in social life. In da'wah activities, the Da'i is the most fundamental element because his presence greatly influences

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planning, implementation, and the goals of the da'wah to be achieved. Therefore, qualified and professional Da'i is needed to provide alternative answers to the problems being faced by society, especially in the current era (Al—Hakim & Bachtiar, 2021; Hatmansyah, 2015; Taufik & Marh, 2018).

The role of the Da'i is not only to preach in the context of spreading religion but also to lead in renewing community life in terms of religion and social aspects. A Da'i significantly influences socializing and making decisions related to development, especially in rural areas. As a result, the presence of quality and professional Da'i will foster an empowered and successful village community life. One effort to create high—quality da'i is to select da'i as it is known in one of the regions in West Sumatra, namely Da'i Nagari.

Da'i Nagari is a program aiming to revive local wisdom and establish an independent community. This program is driven by issues in the social life of people who have lost their identity. According to historical research, the integration between custom and religion in the past was the primary asset of the ulama, particularly in the Pasaman Regency, to develop religious and good—moral communities.

Da'i Nagari, as local ulama who lead an area, certainly have extensive knowledge not only in a religious context but also in social and other contexts. Hence, it is hoped that Dai Nagari, in their capacity as leaders, will be able to maintain the local wisdom values prevalent in the area, especially in the Pasaman Regency of West Sumatra. These local wisdom values can be used to encourage people to move and revive the role and position of Da'i Nagari as one of the religious leaders in Minangkabau society.

Da'i Nagari program refers to local Da'i responsible for doing religious outreach to the community to empower local potential. Da'i Nagari program was first socialized in 2003 based on the Regent's decree number 188.45/321/BUP—Pas/2003. The Da'i Nagari program has picked up a valuable asset in the form of the success of previous ulama in developing communities in rural areas in the Pasaman Regency during this period. Historically, the integration between custom and religion, ulama and umara (Nagari government), has been tested and recognized according to the times. Development in rural areas must be connected to the contribution and strategic role of the ulama in being responsible for their people. Ulama guided, protected, and assisted the people in the past. As time passed, the role of ulama or Da'i became less crucial to the people of his tribe. Sometimes, the space for movement is even more restricted (Sarji et al., 2021).

Da'i Nagari are now obliged to preach not only conventional preaching but also people's development, particularly their social and religious economies. In response to the challenges above, professional human resources are required to meet the people's development demands and ensure the success of development. Observations conducted on Da'i Nagari suggest that several factors are associated with field issues concerning Da'i Nagari, including;

1. Da'i Nagari pay little attention to the changes in society, which move so quickly due to technological advances and globalization.
2. Da'i Nagari pay little attention to the functional relationships of each community component, which are fundamentally interconnected.
3. Da'i Nagari tend to rely more on outdated conventional counseling books and use fewer other sources.
4. Da'i Nagari do not transfer concept information, provide no additional power, and include no strength (not empowering or powerful).
5. Sometimes, Da'i Nagari cannot convince the community of its role in empowering the community in Nagari development.

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6. Da'i Nagari tend to be seen as patronizing rather than protecting the community in Nagari development.

From the mapping above, this study is essential considering that the success of da'wah will depend on the da'i in their da'wah activities. This study addresses the academic concern: "What is the strategic role of Da'i Nagari in rural development?". As a broad concept, da'wah is a scientific discipline that offers guidance and methods for capturing individuals' interests and persuading them to adopt a particular ideology or set of work opinions. In Islam, da'wah entails discerningly inviting individuals to the right path by divine commands to ensure their welfare and contentment in this world and the afterlife (Hefni, 2017).

The term da'wah is very unique. Da'wah is a non−existent term, such as communication or propaganda, even though reporting and communication can be understood as individual community communication. Da'wah is also interpreted as a communication process in social change. In essence, Islamic da'wah is the actualization of faith manifested in a system of activities of believers in the social sector, which is carried out structurally to influence people's thinking, behaving, and acting (Aswadi, 2014).

Many scholars have carried out studies related to da'wah and development. Research by Ismail et al., (2006) revealed that there had been several drastic changes in society due to advances in technology and information, so Da'i should also be able to compensate for this by broadening their horizons and constantly deepening their knowledge. It is reasonable because Da'i, who does not update their knowledge and preaching abilities, tends to be abandoned by society. More specifically, Ismail et al. also found that society's appreciation for Da'i, especially Da'i, who still needs to deepen their knowledge and still rely on conventional knowledge and methods of preaching, tend to receive less response in society.

Some other scholars also stated that da'wah can provide motivation and encouragement as well as change thinking to improve people's attitudes. When da'wah is carried out in impoverished places, the most important thing is that the people's attitude is first formed through *da'wah bil lisan*. If the concept of *da'wah bil lisan* runs well, then *da'wah bil hal* will quickly be realized. More specifically, they discovered that if there is a failure in assisting people's economic development through the IDT program, there are indicators that it is due to a poorly developed mental attitude. By possessing a sound mental state and acknowledging that working hard to maintain trust is a religious teaching, *da'wah bil hal* will succeed (Al−Hakim & Bachtiar, 2021; Aziz, 2018; Ika Selviana, 2019).

This study contributes to the development of da'wah studies and its relationship to community development. It also reveals how the detailed roles of Da'i Nagari are mapped into five crucial roles. Furthermore, the research introduces Da'i Nagari to readers, that da'wah issues will be better if carried out in a structured and organized manner. This research focuses on Da'i Nagari, who are local Da'i from nagari or villages in Pasaman Regency. It aims to explore the utilization of local Da'i as Da'i or religious instructors in the nagari. The type of research used was qualitative descriptive, which provides an accurate picture of events and facts in a particular area using research methods.

Considering the research issues mentioned earlier, the study was conducted in the nagari of Pasaman Regency. Specifically, a sample was taken from the nagari of Limo Koto in Bonjol sub−district. The researcher chose Da'i Nagari in Pasaman Regency as the object of study because Da'i contributed to developing nagari in the Pasaman

Regency. The data collected in this study consisted of key informants, the primary data sources from which the researcher received information. In addition, data were obtained from Da'i Nagari, elements of government, religious leaders, traditional community leaders, and several other community figures deemed able to provide information.

Following the qualitative research procedures used, the aim was to obtain accurate and valid data. The data collection techniques used were observation, interviews, and documentation studies. This study employed inductive data analysis, a method of analyzing data that begins with specific facts and then moves on to generalizations. The data analysis process adopted and developed interactive patterns created by Matthew B. Miles and Michael Huberman, namely data reduction, data verification and deriving conclusions. Triangulation is the most commonly used method for increasing data validity in qualitative research. According to Moelong (Moelong, 2016), triangulation is "a data validity checking technique that uses something other than the data for checking purposes".

Source triangulation and method triangulation techniques were used to guarantee and check the data's validity. Moleong defines source triangulation as comparing and reassessing the degree of trustworthiness of information obtained through time and tools in qualitative research. Meanwhile, the method triangulation technique involves researchers or other observations to check the degree of trustworthiness of the data. By employing this technique, the author can draw solid conclusions from multiple points of view so that the truth can be accepted. The author compares observational data with interview data and related data in its application. Therefore, data obtained from one source can be more verifiably correct than similar data from other sources, so it is easier for researchers to place the data obtained in sorting data (Dewi, 2012).

DA'I NAGARI, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Da'i Nagari

Da'i is a term for people who preach. Nagari is the name of a village in West Sumatra. To uphold local wisdom, the Sumatra Provincial government uses the word Nagari as the lowest level of government. The term "Da'i Nagari" refers to accompanying preachers (Da'i) designated by the Nagari government to act as religious and social instructors and for Nagari development. Da'i Nagari escort the Nagari trustee in religious and social matters and human resource development. Da'i Nagari invite community members to be able to change their lives, as well as the attitudes and behavior of the community, so that they are following the guidance of Allah SWT and the people's attitudes in facing social, economic, and cultural problems.

Community Development

As stated by Hutz et al., (2014), community development refers to a deliberate and organized process of social transformation intended to enhance the community's standard of living as a necessity, with the development carried out in tandem with the dynamics of the development process.

Anwar (2022) explains that development is dependent on society, which can be defined as development through the generation of will (Energizer), willingness, and self−confidence in community members so that they can actively participate in development; additionally, they can move methodically, efficiently, and organized.

This viewpoint arises from the belief that a social movement that is not organized and does not know how to cooperate according to advanced patterns will be unable to solve problems that are becoming increasingly difficult every day. From a macro perspective, the term community development refers to the nation's development as a whole. Meanwhile, in micro, community development is equated with village community development. The primary emphasis in village community development is on the socio−economic and cultural conditions of the community.

Social Transformation

Social transformation comes from the English term "transform," which means controlling one form into another. So, social transformation refers to the process of changing structures, social systems, and culture. On the one hand, transformation can mean a process of change or renewal of social structures; while on the other hand, it denotes a process of changing values.

Transformation means change or something beyond. Social changes are constantly associated with human development. Previously, society was known as an agricultural society, but now it has changed into an industrial society. Changes in society occur through the introduction of new elements. These new elements enter society in two ways: discoveries (inventions) that occur in society and the influence of other societies. A process of change in the structure and function of social systems occurs in at least three stages, namely:

1. Invention is a process in which change is initiated from within society, developed by society, and changes emerge.
2. Diffusion occurs when ideas or concepts acquired from outside are then communicated within a society.
3. Consequences refer to the results of the adoption of these changes.

Changes occur from societal (the result of new technology) and external factors. A transformation process will move more swiftly if the community is open to new ideas or problems from both inside and outside. Social transformation can be intentional and desired by society. For instance, development programs are designed to transform an uncomfortable environment into a pleasant one. Poverty was transformed into prosperity, and agricultural culture was converted into industrial culture. By planning this form of deliberate transformation, management becomes more apparent because it can be programmed to see the changes.

Social transformation does not occur by chance; various factors impact it. The factors that cause this are cultural accumulation, contact with other cultures, heterogeneous populations, social chaos, and social change. The social transformation will involve population, technology, cultural values, and social movements. The Indonesian National Encyclopedia also states that the term social transformation is often interpreted the same as social change.

THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF DA'I NAGARI IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN PASAMAN REGENCY

Consultative Role

The strategic role of Da'i Nagari in the Pasaman Regency society includes a consultative role. It is a two−way communication role between Da'i Nagari and the community. It is clear that Da'i Nagari do not feel exclusive in society and can solve a wide range of social problems; in this case, the willingness and ability of the Da'i to

provide services to the community, especially in treating social diseases prevalent in society. Information, direction, and guidance from Da'i in resolving community problems are manifestations of Da'i Nagari's consultative role.

To perform their strategic role as consultants, they must possess competence and other skills in resolving various community religious problems. Based on interviews with community members, it is commonly believed that Da'i Nagari can resolve other general issues. As a result, the community regards Da'i Nagari as a valuable resource for seeking advice on matters related to family and social life.

During the interview, one of the informants shared his perspective on Da'i Nagari's current role. He believed that Da'i Nagari positioned themselves as consultants for the community. Da'i Nagari carried out this role, considering that an increasing number of issues occur daily in society. Da'i Nagari paid attention to this duty because it is one of their fundamental strategic roles, similar to the consultative role of ulama in the past (Arbn, 2021).

The consultative role of Da'i Nagari in the Pasaman Regency was quite good based on community feedback. However, the informant did not disclose the details of the problems resolved by Da'i Nagari. As a result, the author cannot assess how much Da'i Nagari assist people in resolving issues in their lives. The people of Pasaman Regency recognize this role because they consider Da'i Nagari to have sufficient capability to solve social problems but still use religious information.

For instance, when the Da'i Nagari delivered a religious lecture that resonated with the lives of individuals, the community expressed the challenges they encountered, and Da'i Nagari responded with proposed resolutions. Afrizal et al. states that leading figures in a region generally hold a consultative role. It is in line with the role of Da'i Nagari as an extension of the local government. Presumably, one of the objectives behind establishing the Da'i Nagari program is to achieve such an outcome so that people can convey various aspirations and complaints, as well as a reference for exchanging ideas in resolving problems in religious and social life.

The position of the Da'i Nagari may be likened to religious instructors as they are spread across various regions in Indonesia. Religious instructors are considered to function as counsellors. Functionally, counselors and consultants act as problem solvers for the community. The author believes that the Da'i Nagari can also serve as counselors who can help overcome the community's problems, specifically and personally.

As a result, a preacher must know the latest information in society, both in real life and in the media. The responsibility of a Da'i is challenged in this case, where the Da'i must be responsive to various phenomena in society, not only religious phenomena but also economic, cultural, and social phenomena.

Inovative Role

The Da'i Nagari, like the ulama, play a role in society as innovative people. This role can be understood based on the results of interviews with Da'i Nagari and the community. This strategic role was carried out by Da'i Nagari, considering that changes in society were so fast and drastic. Da'i Nagari's innovative attitude is a form of demand in facing a society changing due to globalization.

According to the informants, the innovative strategic role of the Da'i Nagari is vital considering the changes currently occurring in society, such as the increasing level of public education, which also requires Da'i Nagari to innovate both in preaching and in guiding the community. One of the informants stated that Da'i Nagari already have an innovative mentality and attitude in socializing and mingling amid society; therefore,

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Da'i Nagari can quickly implement his various programs in this role. For example, a Da'i also plays a role in building the community's economy through holiday savings programs so that people can avoid debt to intermediaries when facing Eid needs (Iskandar, 2021).

Da'i Nagari provide innovations for the community's economy through new ideas as prevention media for society. It is meant to prevent people from going into debt to meet their Eid needs. Furthermore, Fachrurozi remarks that a preacher must be able to innovate using media.

Delegative Role

The delegative role refers to approving or granting authority from the community to Da'i Nagari on some issues to represent and convey community aspirations to policy making. This function depends on the community's trust in Da'i Nagari to carry out the community's mandate. One of the Da'i Nagari explained that the majority of the community considers them to be agents of the government as a whole in the social sector, so it is not uncommon for the community to submit various demands and requests to the government through the Da'i Nagari (KLKS, 2021).

Referring to the role of Da'i Nagari as an extension of the government, it is appropriate for the community to be able to submit various demands. However, it is essential to remember that the Da'i Nagari only act as intermediaries, not decision－makers. Others believe that Da'i Nagari are their mouthpiece in the socio－religious field in the nagari because Da'i Nagari were appointed by the government (Sfrd Zkr, 2021).

Concerning this delegative role, as informants, the Da'i Nagari were careful in making policies and decisions when they were interviewed regarding their attitude in accepting and conveying community aspirations to the government. Generally, the Da'i Nagari discuss and consult with fellow Da'i Nagari to ensure they make the right decision to communicate their aspirations. This statement aligns with the Da'i of Nagari Limo Koto, Bonjol Sub－district, who stated in interviews that in conveying the community's aspirations to the government, the Da'i need to refer to the rules for their duties and functions as assigned (KLKS, 2021).

The explanation provided above implies that the Da'i Nagari are obligated to adhere to specific regulations as government delegates or envoys tasked with examining the conditions of rural communities in greater detail. Even though their delegation role gives them the authority to accept and respond to the community's aspirations, the Da'i Nagari can only determine some things. Therefore, their position still needs to be equal to the government.

Participative Role

This participative role is one of the strategic roles determining Da'i Nagari's success in carrying out their programs. This role is strategic and decisive to Da'i Nagari's program in society. If the Da'i Nagari can only invite the community to righteousness and development without actively participating in the center's development activities, they would struggle to carry out the program and even face criticism from the community.

Regarding this participatory role, one of the informants explained that Da'i Nagari actively engages in various development activities in the nagari, both socio－religious and other fields. Another informant added that if Da'i Nagari do not directly participate in the nagari's development, they will be likened to people who bathe monkeys, whose monkeys are told to bathe while their owners are outside. However, the source

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described the Da'i Nagari as people bathing a horse whose owner had first entered the river (Sfrd, 2021).

Based on these findings, it is known that Da'i Nagari have participated in the development as mentioned earlier. Participation is not just joining with the community but accompanying the community in making decisions and providing an example of goodness to the community. The participation of Da'i Nagari in various development activities also enables the occurrence and development of good communication and close relationships between Da'i Nagari and community members. This positive interaction also provides opportunities for exchanging information, opinions, and ideas to improve the quality of people's lives.

The following findings revealed something contradictory. Some people of the Nagari community perceived the presence of Da'i Nagari, while others did not consider their existence significant for the community. However, the author did not find a specific reason why some people perceived the existence of Da'i in their community as being of lesser importance. The subsequent finding further substantiated that certain community members enthusiastically showed fanaticism toward Da'i Nagari. They complained to Da'i Nagari about various issues, including irrigation concerns. In addition, they considered the preacher's solution and decision the most favorable.

Regarding this role of active participation, information was obtained from a highly respected Da'i Nagari, who stated that he was engaged in various community activities, such as providing counseling and sports activities held by young people and even fostering PKK (Family Welfare and Empowerment Organization) activities so that there is a close relationship between Da'i Nagari and the community. The community also supports Da'i Nagari's program due to their harmonious relationship. Da'i Nagari invite people to do good deeds and actively participate in such actions (M. Amn, 2021).

In light of the findings above, the author asserts that Da'i Nagari's participatory role is beyond dispute. Pasalong, as cited by Afrizal, remarks that the participatory role or function includes making decisions and implementing them. In other words, to become role models for society, the Da'i Nagari must participate in every decision and carry out good deeds.

Supervisory Role

Da'i Nagari need this role to prevent deviations and violations of religious teachings and values in society. In carrying out their supervisory role, Da'i Nagari used various methods. Based on the interviews, it was found that the supervision conducted by the Da'i Nagari varied depending on their fundamental characteristics. Despite receiving the same training before their assignment, their primary character strongly influenced how they performed their supervisory roles. Unsurprisingly, certain Da'i Nagari engaged in preventive supervision, while others carried out a curative form.

An informant explained that the supervisory role in the current conditions of society is essential; in fact, it is not only the supervision of Da'i Nagari, but it is best to collaborate with related parties such as *Ninik Mamak* (traditional leaders) and teachers at schools for the younger generation. From the description, the author believes that supervision must be carried out at all levels of society, not just by preachers. The collaboration between Da'i Nagari and various parties has significantly impacted overcoming violations and deviations from religious teachings and noble values of society, as expressed by Da 'i Nagari, *Ninik Mamak*, and the Teacher Council (Sfrd Zkr, 2021).

Comprehensive supervision of levels of society comes from incredibly influential people in the country, such as *Ninik Mamak*, ulama, and intellectuals. Several informants stated that the current generation's lack of respect was one of the impacts of a lack of comprehensive supervision from various components of society (Llh, 2021).

According to the interviews conducted, the author concludes that the supervisory role of Da'i Nagari is performed in collaboration with various levels of society, including significant individuals in the social sphere. Undoubtedly, it is critical to implement preventive measures, such as advising the public in advance about staying informed about current events. It is to provide earlier information to residents regarding matters that may not follow religious and social values and norms.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion results, it can be inferred that Da'i Nagari accompany the Nagari government in numerous nagari or villages in Pasaman Regency. Da'i Nagari's strategic roles include consultative, innovative, delegative, participative, and supervisory. Da'i Nagari have implemented these five strategic roles in society. Despite being derived from the same regulations, the implementation varies. It is because the Da'i's attitude cannot be equated. As a result, diverse viewpoints have emerged among the general populace.

The presence of Da'i Nagari received various responses from the public, both positive and negative. However, among these five roles, the community perceived the participatory role as the most significant in terms of strategic impact. Da'i Nagari participated in every problem−solving and decision−making. The implementation of each role is seen in various aspects. However, the author's prior explanation regarding delineating roles will facilitate readers' comprehension of Da'i Nagari's strategic roles.

Many scholars have not conducted specific studies on Da'i Nagari in West Sumatra. The author hopes that this study will inspire scholars' interest in examining the existence of Da'i Nagari and its specifications for the success of development in rural areas.

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