



## Transnational Islamic Governance and Diaspora Leadership: Empowering Muslim Migrant Communities

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### Abstract:

This study aims to analyze transnational da'wah management strategies, diaspora leadership, and challenges in community empowerment among Indonesian diaspora communities abroad. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, with technical triangulation used to ensure data validity. The findings reveal that transnational da'wah is implemented through community empowerment by strengthening the roles of scholars, students, and university students, providing diaspora services, supporting children's education, and developing collaborative networks with governmental institutions, religious organizations, Indonesian communities, and local communities. The leadership model is characterized by adaptive, service-oriented, and network-based leadership that responds to the diverse needs of diaspora communities. Major challenges include host-country regulations, children's education, diaspora status, limited da'wah outreach, and organizational resource constraints. These findings imply that sustainable transnational da'wah requires an integrated management strategy combining religious identity, community empowerment, social services, institutional networking, and adaptive leadership to strengthen diaspora resilience, participation, and continuity of da'wah activities across national boundaries.

## INTRODUCTION

Global mobility has transformed diaspora communities into important social spaces for maintaining religious identity, building solidarity, and exchanging cultural values across national boundaries. The point is that diaspora communities require forms of religious engagement that extend beyond conventional preaching (Badriyah, 2025; Rozi, 2025; Saleha & Sholihah, 2024). The reason is that migrants live within complex environments where religious needs intersect with education, social welfare, cultural adaptation, institutional relations, and identity preservation. The evidence can be observed in the increasing development of religious organizations that provide educational programs, social services, intellectual activities, and community networks for people living outside their countries of origin (Holid, 2025; Mokhtar et al., 2024; Sholihah & Imam, 2025). These activities demonstrate that transnational da'wah has become

increasingly relevant to the broader development of diaspora communities. The conclusion is that effective transnational da'wah should be understood as a comprehensive process of community management and empowerment rather than merely the transmission of religious messages (Annisa et al., 2025; Enwere et al., 2024; Najiburohman et al., 2025). Therefore, examining how religious organizations manage da'wah across national boundaries is important for understanding how religious communities can remain resilient, socially engaged, and capable of contributing positively to multicultural societies in destination countries.

Diaspora communities generally face challenges that differ from those experienced by communities living within their country of origin. Differences in legal systems, cultural environments, social expectations, language, migration status, and access to educational and religious resources can create complex conditions for maintaining community cohesion (Heath et al., 2022; Sain et al., 2024; Veletsianos et al., 2024). Religious organizations operating within diaspora settings must therefore balance the preservation of religious and cultural identity with adaptation to the regulations and social norms of the host country (Arifin, 2024; Islamiah & Maulidiah, 2024; Purwanto & Wafa, 2023). At the same time, limited organizational resources, fragmented community participation, and diverse demographic backgrounds may affect the continuity of religious and empowerment programs. Children of diaspora families may also encounter challenges in maintaining cultural and religious values while participating in the educational and social systems of the host country (Kusumawati, 2025; Maulidia, 2023; Yong & Zhang, 2025). These conditions create a broader problem concerning how religious organizations can provide meaningful services while remaining adaptive to their surrounding environment. Consequently, transnational da'wah requires strategic management, effective leadership, resource mobilization, and collaborative networks to address the multidimensional needs of diaspora communities sustainably.

The phenomenon of transnational da'wah can be observed through the expanding activities of Indonesian religious communities abroad that combine religious programs with education, social services, intellectual development, and community empowerment. Rather than functioning solely as institutions for religious instruction, these organizations increasingly serve as spaces for strengthening identity, facilitating social interaction, supporting education, and connecting diaspora communities with institutions in both the country of origin and the host country. In this context, the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia represents an important setting because of its geographical proximity, historical connections, shared religious traditions, and multicultural social environment. Religious organizations within the diaspora are required to maintain Indonesian and religious identities while simultaneously developing harmonious relationships with local communities and complying with national regulations. Their activities demonstrate that da'wah can function as a mechanism for strengthening social resilience and institutional cooperation. This phenomenon indicates that successful transnational da'wah depends not only on religious knowledge, but also on organizational capacity, adaptive leadership, community services, and the ability to develop networks across different social and institutional environments.

Previous studies on transnational religious organizations have examined various dimensions of diaspora religious networks, including the development of religious identity, transnational religious agency, institutional relations, and the role of religious organizations in international social engagement. Research concerning diaspora religious

networks has demonstrated that organizations can become important actors in maintaining religious traditions while constructing connections between communities in different countries. Other studies have highlighted the role of religious organizations abroad in developing social and diplomatic relationships through cultural and religious activities. Research on contemporary da'wah management has also emphasized the importance of program management, resource utilization, networking, and organizational adaptation in responding to social change. However, these studies tend to examine transnational religious activities from separate perspectives, focusing either on religious identity, international networks, diplomacy, or organizational management. Such approaches provide valuable insights but do not fully explain how these dimensions interact within the daily management of diaspora da'wah. This limitation creates an important space for further investigation into integrated transnational da'wah management.

Another limitation in the existing literature concerns the relationship between diaspora Islamic leadership and organizational strategies for community empowerment. Previous research has provided valuable descriptions of religious networks and diaspora organizations, yet limited attention has been given to how leaders simultaneously manage religious identity, community needs, institutional relationships, and adaptation to the regulatory environment of a host country (Adeoye & Baharun, 2025; Islamiah & Maulidiah, 2024; Khan et al., 2019). This issue is particularly important because leadership in diaspora organizations operates within conditions of cultural diversity, migration complexity, limited resources, and changing community expectations. The absence of an integrated perspective may result in an incomplete understanding of how transnational da'wah organizations sustain their activities and respond to challenges. The present research addresses this gap by examining the relationship between da'wah management, diaspora Islamic leadership, community empowerment, and institutional networking within one organizational context. Its contribution lies in developing a more comprehensive understanding of transnational da'wah as an organizational process that combines religious mission with social services, education, empowerment, networking, and environmental adaptation. Addressing this gap is important for strengthening both theoretical and practical approaches to diaspora da'wah management.

The state of the art of this research lies in integrating transnational da'wah management with diaspora Islamic leadership and community empowerment within a multicultural host-country environment. Rather than viewing da'wah only as religious communication, this study conceptualizes it as an organizational process involving planning, resource organization, program implementation, networking, leadership, and continuous adaptation. This perspective is important because diaspora organizations must preserve religious and cultural identity while responding to the realities of migration and multicultural interaction. The research is particularly significant because sustainable community empowerment requires coordination among religious leaders, scholars, students, families, community members, governmental institutions, and social networks. Understanding these relationships can reveal how organizational leadership transforms religious values into practical community services and empowerment programs. The novelty of this study therefore lies in examining the interconnected mechanisms through which transnational da'wah is managed, led, and adapted within a diaspora setting. Resolving this issue is essential for developing sustainable models of religious engagement that strengthen community resilience while encouraging constructive

participation within multicultural societies and maintaining meaningful connections across national boundaries.

This research addresses three central problems: how transnational da'wah is strategically managed to empower diaspora communities, how Islamic diaspora leadership adapts to multicultural and regulatory environments, and what challenges influence the implementation of da'wah and community empowerment. The study argues that effective transnational da'wah is likely to emerge when religious identity, adaptive leadership, community empowerment, institutional networking, and social services are managed as interconnected components rather than separate activities. Such an approach enables organizations to respond to community needs while maintaining their religious and cultural foundations. The study therefore seeks to analyze the strategies used to organize transnational da'wah, examine the characteristics of diaspora Islamic leadership, and identify the challenges affecting organizational sustainability. The expected contribution is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the study strengthens discussion on transnational da'wah management and diaspora Islamic leadership by connecting religious activities with organizational and social dimensions. Practically, it provides insights for diaspora religious organizations seeking to improve empowerment programs, strengthen networks, manage resources, and develop adaptive strategies within complex multicultural environments across national boundaries.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of transnational da'wah management, diaspora Islamic leadership, and community empowerment strategies within a specific organizational context (Okoko et al., 2023; Salmona & Kaczynski, 2024; Takona, 2024). A case study was selected because the research focuses on exploring a contemporary phenomenon in its natural setting and examining the interaction between organizational practices, leadership patterns, institutional networks, community needs, and environmental conditions. The research was conducted at PCINU Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, which was purposively selected because the organization actively carries out religious, educational, social service, intellectual development, community empowerment, and diaspora-related activities. The location was considered relevant because it represents a transnational religious organization operating within a multicultural environment and facing the social and regulatory conditions of a host country.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. The primary informant was the Rais Syuriyah of PCINU Malaysia, selected purposively because of his direct knowledge and involvement in organizational management. The interview explored the organization's development, transnational da'wah strategies, program planning and implementation, leadership practices, resource management, institutional relationships, community empowerment, and challenges encountered in conducting activities abroad. Observation was used to examine organizational activities and community engagement, while documentation was used to complement information obtained from interviews and observations. The combination of these techniques enabled the researcher to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being investigated.

Data analysis followed an interactive qualitative analysis process consisting of

data condensation, data display, and verification or conclusion drawing. During data condensation, interview transcripts, observation records, and relevant documents were selected, simplified, coded, and categorized according to the research focus, including transnational da'wah management, diaspora Islamic leadership, community empowerment, institutional networking, and organizational challenges. The condensed data were then displayed thematically to identify relationships, patterns, and meaningful findings. The final stage involved verifying emerging interpretations by repeatedly examining the consistency of the data and relating the findings to the research questions. Data validity was strengthened through technical triangulation, namely by comparing and cross-checking information obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation. This procedure was particularly important because the study involved one primary informant, allowing the researcher to assess the consistency of information across different data collection techniques rather than relying solely on a single source.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

#### **The Historical Formation and Orientation of PCINU Malaysia**

The presence of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in Malaysia initially developed through Indonesian communities that maintained religious traditions and NU values within the diaspora. Before becoming a formal organization, NU-related activities were conducted through religious gatherings and community activities. The growing community created a need for an organizational structure that could connect, coordinate, and consolidate Indonesians with NU affiliations.

The formation process developed through consolidation among Indonesian students, intellectuals, and community leaders. Meetings at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia became important spaces for discussing the establishment of a formal NU organization. The process gradually expanded from student initiatives into broader community involvement and strengthened the organizational basis of NU in Malaysia.

The development of PCINU Malaysia therefore reflects a gradual process of diaspora consolidation. The organization emerged through the development of religious communities, identification of community needs, networking, and institutionalization of relationships with NU in Indonesia. This process demonstrates the role of PCINU in maintaining religious and social connections among Indonesian communities abroad.

Its orientation subsequently expanded beyond religious activities toward community empowerment. PCINU Malaysia focuses on intellectual development, education, social services, community networking, diaspora protection, and strengthening the independence of Indonesian communities. This multidimensional orientation enables PCINU to respond to the diverse needs of Indonesian society in Malaysia.

#### **Diaspora Empowerment and Transnational Da'wah Management**

PCINU Malaysia implements diaspora empowerment through programs addressing religious, educational, intellectual, and social needs. Its activities involve Indonesian intellectuals, students, workers, families, and broader community groups. This approach positions diaspora communities not merely as recipients of religious services but as active participants in organizational development and community strengthening.

Intellectual and student empowerment is conducted through networks that connect individuals from different educational and professional backgrounds. These networks facilitate knowledge exchange, collaboration, and organizational participation. At the same time, PCINU provides social assistance for Indonesians experiencing illness, bereavement, repatriation needs, and other difficulties that require organizational support and coordination.

Education represents another important area of empowerment, particularly through support for Indonesian children in Malaysia. PCINU responds to educational challenges by strengthening parental awareness and supporting learning opportunities for children with diverse social and administrative circumstances. Education therefore becomes an important instrument for strengthening the long-term capacity and future prospects of diaspora communities.

Transnational da'wah management is implemented through planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. PCINU identifies community needs, coordinates organizational resources, develops institutional cooperation, implements religious and social programs, and evaluates activities according to local conditions. This management process demonstrates that transnational da'wah involves not only religious activities but also social services, education, protection, and community development.

### **Adaptive Leadership and Strategic Responses in a Multicultural Environment**

PCINU Malaysia operates within a multicultural environment that requires continuous adaptation. Religious activities must consider Malaysian regulations, including requirements concerning religious speakers, locations, and responsible parties. Consequently, organizational leaders must understand the external environment while maintaining the organization's religious identity and ensuring that activities remain appropriate to local conditions.

The organization also faces challenges related to the geographical distribution of Indonesian communities, educational conditions, children's administrative status, and limited organizational resources. Because many administrators have professional responsibilities outside PCINU, program implementation must be adjusted to available time, personnel, and organizational capacity. These circumstances require flexible strategies and effective coordination.

These conditions have encouraged three leadership characteristics: adaptive, service-oriented, and network-based leadership. Adaptive leadership is demonstrated through adjustment to regulations and local circumstances. Service-oriented leadership is reflected in assistance for community members and attention to education and social welfare. Meanwhile, network-based leadership develops through cooperation with various community and institutional actors.

Overall, PCINU Malaysia integrates religious identity, community empowerment, social services, education, protection, and networking into a transnational da'wah model. Its leadership and management practices demonstrate the ability to connect organizational objectives with the realities of diaspora life. This integration enables PCINU Malaysia to maintain its organizational identity while responding to the social and multicultural environment in Malaysia.

### **Discussion**

The findings demonstrate that transnational da'wah management in PCINU

Malaysia has developed beyond the delivery of religious messages into an integrated practice of diaspora empowerment. Empowerment encompasses intellectual development for scholars, students, and university communities, social services, education for diaspora children, community protection, and institutional networking. This finding is consistent with Ramdani (2024), who identified transnational da'wah in Malaysia as a mechanism for empowering migrant communities through social, educational, and community-strengthening dimensions. It also corresponds with Suhada et al. (2024), who emphasized empowerment and advocacy as important needs among Indonesian migrant communities in Malaysia. However, the present findings extend this literature by demonstrating that these empowerment activities are not implemented as separate initiatives but are managed through interconnected organizational functions.

The distinctive contribution of this study lies in demonstrating the integration between diaspora empowerment and the POAC management framework. Planning is reflected in the identification of diaspora needs, organizing through the development of relationships with internal and external actors, actuating through the implementation of educational, religious, and social programs, and controlling through adjustments to regulations and local conditions (Khofsah & Rozi, 2025; Syafiih, 2025). This finding indicates that the effectiveness of transnational da'wah is not determined solely by the substance of religious activities but also by the organization's managerial capacity to translate community needs into structured programs. Theoretically, this finding expands the application of da'wah management by positioning diaspora communities as active subjects within the management process rather than merely as recipients of da'wah services.

The findings further indicate that the management of transnational da'wah involves continuous negotiation between maintaining organizational and religious identity and adapting to the social and institutional environment of Malaysia. In contrast to approaches that primarily emphasize the transmission of religious identity across national borders, PCINU Malaysia demonstrates that transnational religious organization requires contextual adaptation. Cooperation with KBRI, PBNU, Indonesian communities, and local networks enables PCINU to maintain its organizational connection with NU in Indonesia while responding to the specific circumstances of Indonesian communities in Malaysia. Thus, transnationalism in this context is not simply the extension of an organization across national boundaries, but a dynamic process of maintaining identity while adapting organizational practices to the host-country environment.

Practically, these findings suggest that diaspora religious organizations require flexible, collaborative, and community-oriented management models. Regulatory requirements, geographical distribution of diaspora communities, and limited organizational resources require PCINU Malaysia to develop networks as strategic organizational resources. Network-based leadership therefore contributes not only to organizational coordination but also to the delivery of services, advocacy, education, protection, and community empowerment. This provides a practical contribution by demonstrating that institutional partnerships can function as mechanisms for overcoming internal limitations and expanding the reach of diaspora services. For PCINU Malaysia and similar organizations, strengthening networks should therefore be developed systematically as part of long-term organizational planning rather than treated merely as supporting cooperation.

At the same time, the findings should be interpreted within the contextual

boundaries of this study and cannot be generalized directly to all Islamic diaspora organizations in Malaysia or other countries. Nevertheless, the study contributes to the literature by proposing an integrated understanding of transnational da'wah management that connects POAC, diaspora empowerment, adaptive leadership, and network-based collaboration. Future research can strengthen this contribution by involving broader groups of informants, including organizational leaders, diaspora members, migrant workers, and students, as well as examining other PCINU branches or Islamic diaspora organizations in different countries. Comparative and longitudinal studies would also be valuable for examining how management strategies, leadership patterns, and empowerment models develop across different social, political, and regulatory contexts.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, transnational da'wah management within PCINU Malaysia functions not merely as the administration of religious activities but also as a mechanism for diaspora empowerment through social services, education, intellectual development, community protection, and networking. The main lesson of this study is that the sustainability of da'wah in diaspora communities depends on the organization's ability to integrate NU identity with adaptive, service-oriented, and collaborative leadership while responding to the local context. Scientifically, this study contributes by integrating the perspectives of da'wah management, religious transnationalism, diaspora empowerment, and Islamic leadership within a single analytical framework. However, the study is limited to the context of PCINU Malaysia and its available informants, restricting broader generalization. Future research should involve more diverse informants, expand geographical coverage, and employ comparative or longitudinal approaches to examine the development of diaspora da'wah strategies more comprehensively.

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