

# Research Horizon

ISSN: 2808-0696 (p), 2807-9531 (e)

## Research Horizon

Volume: 05

Issue: 06

Year: 2025

Page: 2699-2712

## Citation:

Munib, A., Al Humaidy, M. A., Choliq, A., & Jauhari, M. (2025). Misuse of dakwah as religious tyranny in the film bidaah: A critical discourse analysis. *Research Horizon*, 5(6), 2699-2712.

## Article History:

Received: October 10, 2025

Revised: December 17,

2025

Accepted: December 29,

2025

Online since: December 31,

2025

## Misuse of Dakwah as Religious Tyranny in the Film Bidaah: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Abd Munib<sup>1\*</sup>, Mohammad Ali Al Humaidy<sup>2</sup>, Abdul Choliq<sup>3</sup>, Minan Jauhari<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Dakwah dan Komunikasi Al-Hamidy Pamekasan, Pamekasan, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Madura, Pamekasan, Indonesia

<sup>3,4</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, Jember, Indonesia

\* Corresponding author: Abd Munib ([munib11emdi@gmail.com](mailto:munib11emdi@gmail.com))

## Abstract

This article explores the tyranny of dakwah in the Malaysian film Bidaah. Dakwah, which should guide audiences toward Sharia, is instead portrayed as a tool of oppression. The study employs critical discourse analysis based on Norman Fairclough's framework, examining textual elements, discourse practices, and the broader social context that shapes them. The findings highlight three key points. First, dakwah shifts from a spiritual mission to an instrument of social control, evident in how followers are forced to accept teachings uncritically, thus legitimizing violence in the name of religion. Second, dakwah is depicted as a dominant discourse across micro, meso, and macro dimensions. The micro dimension is seen in the rhetorical strategies used by Walid Muhammad to assert absolutism. The meso dimension involves dakwah being structured, closed, and ritualistic, transforming it from a dialogue to domination. At the macro level, the dakwah discourse reinforces unjust and exploitative social structures. Third, the film introduces a counter-discourse that challenges the tyranny of dakwah. Baiduri becomes the central figure who resists injustice and constructs an alternative narrative that confronts Walid's authority. This study contributes to the scholarly understanding of religious discourse in film, offering a foundation for further research into similar representations in cinema.

## Keywords

Cinema, Critical Discourse Analysis, Dakwah, Film Bidaah, Religious Authority, Tyranny.

## 1. Introduction

Religion in human civilization has long served as a central value system shaping ways of thinking, acting, and interacting (Kamraju, 2025). In the context of Indonesian and Malaysian societies, two nations with Muslim majorities and strong cultural heritages, religion exists not merely as a spiritual practice but also as a social and political force that profoundly influences the structure of collective life. Dakwah as the activity of conveying religious values, is essentially intended to invite humanity toward goodness, wisdom, and inner peace (Yulianto, 2020). However, in contemporary social practice, dakwah has often undergone a transformation of meaning that distances it from its fundamental values (Ayub & Hussain, 2023).

A number of sociological and anthropological studies have found that religious authority often becomes an institution that is beyond the reach of criticism (Hefner, 2025). When this authority becomes absolutely attached to certain individuals or groups, dakwah which should be dialogical and transformative has the potential to turn into a tool of social control, and may eventually evolve into an instrument of tyranny that bases its legitimacy on spiritual claims (Wessels, 2022). This phenomenon occurs not only in real social spaces but has also begun to be critically explored in various cultural representations, including the medium of film.

The development of cinema as a product of popular culture has opened up new spaces for critical reflection on religious issues (Linze & Desa, 2024). In recent decades, Southeast Asian cinema particularly from Indonesia and Malaysia has grown increasingly bold in presenting narratives that challenge the dominance of religious institutions and reveal the complex relationship between power and spirituality. The representation of religion in film no longer merely conveys moral messages or normative dakwah, but simultaneously becomes a discursive arena where religious values, authority, and interpretations are openly questioned (Sevindi, 2021).

The film referred to in this study is *Bidaah* (2025), a Malaysian fiction film that depicts the story of a closed religious community called Jihad Ummah. The community is led by a charismatic figure named Walid Muhammad, who bases his entire system of authority on the legitimacy of dakwah (religious preaching) and spiritual claims. The film follows the journey of the main character, Baiduri, a young woman who initially seeks spiritual enlightenment but instead finds herself trapped within a repressive and manipulative system. Through its poignant narrative, *Bidaah* presents a dark portrayal of how dakwah can be used as a mechanism of control and domination, rather than as a path toward spiritual liberation.

The film title *Bidaah* itself carries a strong connotation within Islamic tradition. The term *bidaah* typically refers to innovations in religious practice that are considered to deviate from the original teachings (Syukur & Huda, 2025). However, in the context of this film, the meaning of *bidaah* is reversed to serve as a critique of religious authority itself, which is depicted as committing deviations in its own religious practices. Herein lies the power of cinema as a tool of social critique: it not only presents an alternative narrative but also dismantles the symbolic status quo that has long been maintained through the language of religion (Shehab, 2023).

The film raises several important issues that are highly relevant to the dynamics of modern society, such as religious authoritarianism, the manipulation of religious symbols, the oppression of women within closed communities, and the conflict between individual spirituality and a silencing power structure. In *Bidaah*, dakwah is no longer portrayed as an enlightening invitation but rather as a practice twisted to enforce blind obedience through threats, indoctrination, and symbolic violence.

The phenomena depicted in *Bidaah* are not merely cinematic fiction, they may well be rooted in social realities that often escape public attention due to the existence of exclusive religious communities isolated from the outside world. Across

various regions of Southeast Asia, there are religious groups that emphasize absolute obedience to spiritual leaders and restrict access to information as well as social interactions outside the community (Wahyono, Gamon, & Shah, 2024). When a religious leader becomes the sole source of truth and interpretation of religion, a situation arises that is highly susceptible to abuse of power ranging from psychological control and restriction of civil rights to doctrine-based violence (Esparagoza & Baybado, 2025).

In this study, cinema is not merely a medium of entertainment but also a powerful tool for delivering socio-political critique. *Bidaah* can be read as a form of counter-narrative to the dominant perspectives on religion, which often tend to be idealized and harmonious. Through its cinematic world, the film boldly opens a discussion on the abuse of power in the religious sphere, particularly within the framework of exclusive and authoritarian dakwah.

Thus, this study aims to examine how dakwah is represented in the film *Bidaah* as a tool of tyranny. To explore this objective, the study employs a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach developed by Norman Fairclough. This approach allows the researcher to dissect the relationships between language, power, and ideology within the film's narrative. CDA posits that discourse not only reflects reality but also shapes and produces certain social structures (Fairclough, 2023). In the context of *Bidaah*, dakwah as a form of discursive practice is examined both through verbal texts, such as dialogue and narration, as well as visual symbols, cinematic atmosphere, and the dynamics of interactions between characters (Muragmi, 2024).

How is the tyranny of da'wah manifested in the film *Bidaah*? To answer this research question, the study explores three key aspects. First, the shift of da'wah from a spiritual mission to social control. Second, the representation of da'wah as a dominant discourse. Third, the counter-discourse that deconstructs the tyranny of da'wah in the film *Bidaah*. Da'wah, which should ideally serve to guide the audience towards the path of Sharia, is instead portrayed differently in this film. Therefore, this research is grounded in the issue that the film *Bidaah* presents a phenomenon of the misuse of da'wah, which ultimately leads to religious tyranny.

This study is not intended to discredit religious practices or dakwah institutions in general. On the contrary, it aims to emphasize that religion must always be approached critically and ethically, so as to avoid falling into authoritarianism under the guise of sanctity. The film *Bidaah* serves as an example of how cinema can act as a medium that gives voice to marginalized truths, exposes repression hidden beneath the veneer of spirituality, and advocates for the individual's right to think, question, and liberate themselves from tyranny claimed in the name of faith.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Theory of Religious Authority**

Religious authority refers to the power or influence held by individuals, groups, or religious institutions within a society (Hidayatullah, 2024). This concept is closely related to social structures and the ways in which religious leaders influence the lives of individuals and communities. Religious authority is often linked to beliefs, traditions, and the interpretation of sacred texts. Consequently, religious leaders possess the ability to provide moral, spiritual, and even legal guidance that is followed by their followers. According to Weber, authority can be distinguished into three types: rational-legal, traditional, and charismatic (Tungkagi, 2024). In the context of religion, charismatic authority is often associated with individuals who possess extraordinary abilities or charisma, believed to have a direct connection with divine power.

Leaders of this nature can influence their followers through personal power and a compelling charisma, as seen in the phenomenon of religious leaders who are

believed to receive direct revelation. Social authority in religion also plays a crucial role, as religious leaders serve as the primary interpreters of sacred texts and provide moral guidance to the community (Zulkarnain & Rohimah, 2024). This includes authority in the form of instructions on how followers should live their lives according to religious teachings. This phenomenon also extends to broader forms of authority in social and political decision-making.

Theological authority refers to the ability to explain or interpret God's revelation and religious principles in a legitimate and authentic manner (Rusdi, Soheh, & Mujiburrahman, 2025). In this regard, theologians or religious scholars play a crucial role in maintaining religious authority to ensure that teachings remain aligned with sacred texts (Wahyudi & Solehudin, 2025). In other words, religious authority reflects the power of certain individuals through traditions and structures that shape the worldview and social behavior of the community.

## **2.2. Power in Da'wah**

Da'wah is the activity of spreading religious teachings with the aim of inviting others to follow the principles of the faith that is believed (Khoir & Anshory, 2023). Power in da'wah refers to the ability to influence or guide others through the delivery of religious messages (Huda M. K., 2024). This power can be direct, as seen in the teachings by religious leaders, or more subtle, as in the use of mass media to spread religious teachings. In this sense, da'ees (those who preach) act as both messengers and agents of change within society. As technology and communication evolve, da'wah now extends beyond physical spaces, such as mosques, to include platforms like social media and film (Rizal, Maula, & Idamatussilmi, 2024). In the digital world, da'wah has the potential to reach a broader audience, which means that the power of preaching becomes more distributed. As a result, da'wah becomes more dynamic and adaptive to the changing times.

The power in da'wah also carries challenges and risks. On one hand, the influence of da'wah can be used to raise religious awareness and motivate positive change within society. On the other hand, da'wah can also be misused for political or ideological purposes that may not align with the universal values of the faith (Munandar & Susanti, 2024). Therefore, those involved in da'wah are required to exercise wisdom in using their power to ensure that the messages conveyed remain relevant, ethical, and inclusive. With the growth of digital media, anyone can become an agent of da'wah, with power more widely distributed. This is evident in the rise of religious influencers on platforms like Instagram or YouTube.

According to a study conducted by Amin and Sururi, digital da'wah has a significant impact on shaping religious perceptions among the younger generation, who tend to be more open to technology (Amin & Sururi, 2025). Meanwhile, research by Kadir and Kamal shows that the use of social media as a tool for da'wah can expand its influence, but it is also vulnerable to misinformation and extremism (Kadir & Kamal, 2025). This indicates that the power in da'wah requires a great moral responsibility. Therefore, it is essential to develop an understanding of the power dynamics in da'wah to ensure that religious messages are conveyed effectively and responsibly.

## **2.3. Cinema as Discourse**

Cinema as discourse refers to the understanding of film as a medium of communication that conveys specific messages or ideologies to the audience. More than just entertainment, film functions as an instrument that can influence and shape social, political, and cultural perspectives within society (Muthmainnah, 2023). In other words, cinema is more than just entertainment, as it simultaneously serves as an important means of conveying ideas and shaping public opinion. In the context of religion, cinema is often used as a tool to communicate religious values or even to portray the conflict between religion and society (Hamdani, Nurchamidah, & Bakhit,

2025). The representation of religious characters in films, narratives that address spiritual themes, and the relationship between religion and power can shape the way audiences perceive religious authority (Amin & Hidayat, 2024).

This supports the notion that films not only reflect social realities but also shape the audience's perspective on certain issues. The use of cinema in religious discourse is evident in works such as *Film Siksa Kubur*, *Air Mata di Ujung Sajadah*, and *Merindu Cahaya De Amstel*. Cinema opens up space for discussions about religion that are not only based on narratives but also on the values that play a role in shaping our understanding of the world. As a discourse, cinema does not position the audience as passive recipients but as active individuals who reflect upon and evaluate the implicit messages within the film. Thus, film plays a significant role in shaping how we view religion, culture, and society (Huda, Nafsika, & Salman, 2023).

### **3. Methods**

This study employs a qualitative-interpretative approach using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method developed by Norman Fairclough. This approach was chosen to explore how language and discourse in the film *Bidaah* represent power relations within the context of dakwah and religious authority. Critical discourse analysis enables the researcher to examine how discourse dominates, shapes, maintains social structures, and challenges such domination (Jørgensen, Frederiksen, Watson, Hansen, & Karlsson, 2025). The data for this study were collected through a documentation study technique by analyzing the film *Bidaah*. The data collection process involved repeatedly watching the film, identifying key scenes, and listening to dialogues that depict the use of dakwah as a tool of power.

Documentation of the film's dialogues was the primary focus for collecting data related to the representation of language and the symbols used by the characters. The collected data were then analyzed using Fairclough's three levels of analysis. First, text analysis, which involves understanding word choice, sentence structure, and symbolism used in the film. Second, discourse practice analysis, which examines the social and power relations among the characters in the film. Third, social context analysis, which considers how the social and political conditions in Indonesia influence the discourse constructed in the film.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

#### **4.1. The Shift of Preaching from a Spiritual Mission to Social Control**

Dakwah is a fundamental pillar in Islamic teachings, understood as a compassionate and wise call to guide people toward the path of Allah (Mahya & Waluyajati, 2025). Historically, dakwah was carried out by prophets and scholars as a spiritual mission emphasizing moral development, purification of the soul, and social reform based on principles of justice and mercy (Salam, Rhain, & Nurrohim, 2024). However, in certain social contexts, dakwah can deviate from its original purpose, as the movement may transform into an instrument of social control or even a tool for legitimizing oppression and violence (Azzahra, Harahap, Triansyah, & Marzuki, 2025). Through the character of Walid and the Jamaah Jihad Ummah community, the film vividly illustrates how religious symbols can be used to manipulate, silence, and subjugate individuals for the sake of power.

The character Walid in the film represents a charismatic cult leader who abuses religion to control his followers. He claims to be the Imam Mahdi, an eschatological figure in Islamic teachings believed to appear near the end of times to establish justic (Ritonga, 2021). With this claim, Walid positions himself as a sacred figure beyond criticism. He not only leads spiritually but also controls nearly every aspect of his followers' lives. He sets rules, decides who may marry, and even determines who is

worthy of heaven or hell. In Walid's hands, dakwah no longer serves as an invitation to draw closer to God, but becomes a means to subjugate people to himself.



**Figure 1.** The Character Walid's Declaration as Imam Mahdi Before the Followers of Jihad Ummah

Figure 1 is the scene where Walid declares himself as Imam Mahdi. In Figure 1, In the first episode, at the 4th minute, Walid cites QS. An-Nisa:59 to reinforce his position as an absolute leader. The verse, which states, "*Obey Allah, the Messenger, and those in authority among you,*" is misused to enforce total obedience to himself. He equates obedience to the leader with obedience to God, even asserting that loyalty to him is the primary path to heaven. This constitutes a dangerous distortion of dakwah, as reason is suppressed and individual will is paralyzed in the name of religion. His followers are not only forbidden to question him but are also gripped by fear of punishment and damnation if they dare to challenge Walid.

Walid's practice of dakwah extends beyond spiritual manipulation into highly repressive social control. In the second episode, when his wives request fairness in the division of his time, Walid does not respond with logic or empathy but with divine rhetoric. He claims that they lack patience, contentment (*rida*), and sincerity (*ikhlas*), and therefore are unworthy of entering heaven. This statement illustrates how spiritual teachings are used to justify unequal relations and male dominance over women (Kumari, 2022). Justice is replaced by dogma, and women's voices are silenced under religious pretexts monopolized by the leader.

Walid's manipulation becomes even more evident through extreme symbolic acts. In the seventh episode, the entire congregation is ordered to drink water used to wash Walid's feet as a form of servitude and total submission. This act not only demonstrates the psychological grip Walid holds over his followers but also shows how the leader's body is elevated to a sacred object beyond question. When the human body is positioned as a representation of God, the line between *tawhid* (monotheism) and *shirk* (idolatry) begins to blur (Oliver & Oliver, 2023). Dakwah, which should teach the sanctity of Allah and the humility of creation, is transformed into the worship of one human by another.



**Figure 2.** The Character Walid Influencing the Followers of Jihad Ummah

Figure 2 shows the scene where Walid influences his people to marry him. The social control established by Walid is also evident in how he regulates sexual relations and marriage within the Jamaah Jihad Ummah. In the third episode and onwards, Walid freely marries off 16 year old teenage girls without a legitimate legal process under the pretext of spiritual marriage. He claims that the marriage is a divine command, and that he is the path to heaven. In episode nine, at the 11th minute, Walid says to Dewi, a teenage girl in the congregation, “*Allah sent Walid to guide Dewi to heaven.*” This statement becomes a pretext to touch and rape Dewi, who is unable to resist due to fear and social pressure. This event shows that the preaching has been reduced to a tool of power over women’s bodies, where religious teachings are distorted to legitimize sexual violence.



**Figure 3.** Walid’s Figure Influencing Dewi to Become a Spiritual Wife

Figure 3 is a scene where Walid influences Dewi, who is one of his followers, to become his spiritual wife. Oppression in the name of religion does not stop at spiritual or sexual power but is also applied physically and brutally. In the sixth episode, Walid orders a pair of teenagers found alone together to be stoned to death. He declares that their actions are a grave sin and their bodies must be cleansed of the devil. There is no process of proof, no room for defense. All the congregation accepts it as absolute truth. This is the extreme form of social control based on religion where violence is legalized in the name of enforcing sharia law, while what actually occurs is brutal and unconstitutional repression (Pratiwi & Sunaryo, 2021).

#### **4.2. Representation of Da’wah as a Dominant Discourse**

The film *Bidaah* presents a sharp critique of the deviations in preaching practices within exclusive religious communities. Through the character Walid Muhammad, the film offers a narrative of how preaching, which ideally should be a means of spreading spiritual and humanitarian values, instead shifts into a tool of repressive

social control. Fairclough's theory, which views discourse as a social practice that reflects and reproduces power through three dimensions, namely micro (language structure or text), meso (discursive practice or the production and distribution of discourse), and macro (social practice or larger ideological structures), is very appropriately applied (Riyanti, 2023).

First, the micro dimension. At the micro level, the film *Bidaah* displays language patterns used by Walid Muhammad to systematically consolidate his power. He often uses imperative diction, strong modality, and closes off space for discussion. An example, like the scene in figure 4, can be found in episode 1, at the 4th minute, when Walid says: "No matter how great the sacrifice one is willing to make, it will never be perfect if it violates the rules and disobeys the leader. Because obedience to the leader is obligatory as stated in Allah's word in QS. An Nisa verse 59."



Figure 4. Walid Pressing His Wife with a Verse from the Quran

This statement shows a religious-based discourse construction that absolutizes Walid's authority, equating himself with the concept of *ulil amri* in Islam. The sentence structure used is declarative and leaves no room for debate, forcing followers to obey without any space for interpretation. Words like apostate, followers of the devil, and heresy are repeated in various episodes, such as when the *Jamaah Jihad Ummah* testifies to Walid's order to stigmatize every form of disobedience as a form of spiritual betrayal. In episode 2, at minute 7, when the wives demand justice, Walid mocks them: "You all do not yet have patience, contentment, sincerity. How can you enter heaven?"

This sentence shows how religious discourse is shaped to discipline the body and soul of women through frightening spiritual labeling. The use of high-pitched sentences, repetition of sacred words, and rejection of interruptions or questions are silencing linguistic strategies. This becomes a manifestation of linguistic ideology that normalizes power relation inequalities, precisely as understood within Fairclough's micro framework.

Second, the meso dimension. At the meso level, the film *Bidaah* shows how *dakwah* is produced and consumed within a structured, closed, and highly ritualistic framework. The practice of *dakwah* is no longer a space for religious dialogue, but rather an arena for reproducing dominant discourse. In every religious gathering shown, such as in episode 6, Walid stands on a podium with bright lighting, while the congregation sits neatly in the dark. This choice of setting is not just a cinematic choice but a visual representation of discursive hierarchy: who speaks, who listens, and who controls the meaning. In episode 7, Walid orders the congregation to drink the water used to wash his feet. This ritual is depicted not as an expression of spiritual love, but as a symbol of total devotion to an individual who has been mythologized. The discourse is no longer merely verbal but becomes a ritual action

that internalizes power structures. This discourse production process does not open access to external information (Hamilton, Oganian, Hall, & Chang, 2021).

Followers are forbidden from questioning the teachings, let alone seeking other references. This shows a monopoly of discourse, where Walid's voice becomes the only legitimate authoritative source. Even figures like Hambali, who has just returned from Egypt and has an academic foundation, are not given space to express alternative interpretations. Within Fairclough's framework, this discursive practice demonstrates how a community produces, distributes, and consumes discourse in a way that isolates pluralism. The social structure of the preaching becomes an ivory tower that rejects openness and glorifies narrative exclusivity.

Third, the macro dimension. At the macro dimension, the discourse of da'wah (Islamic preaching) constructed in the film *Bidaah* becomes a tool for reproducing an unjust social structure, even tending to be exploitative. Walid's moral and spiritual authority is used to create a social identity that is submissive and passive. Religious discourse within the Jihad Ummah community is used to legitimize physical and sexual violence. In episode 9, at minute 11, Walid tells Dewi: "*Allah has sent Walid to guide Dewi to heaven.*"

#### **4.3. Counter Discourse in the Unveiling of the Tyranny of Dawah**

The film *Bidaah* presents the character Walid as the leader of the Jamaah Jihad Ummah who claims to be the Imam Mahdi, positioning himself as the sole spiritual figure who must be absolutely obeyed. In this closed community, preaching is no longer a means of spreading religious values that are a mercy to all worlds, but rather a tool for social domination and absolute control (Gunawan, Sirojuddin, & Yasin, 2025). Walid uses religious arguments to silence criticism and force complete obedience, turning the preaching discourse that should open a space for dialogue into symbolic tyranny and real violence. In the first episode, Walid quotes QS. An-Nisa verse 59, which emphasizes the obligation to obey leaders, then interprets the verse extremely to justify his absolute authority. He says that opposing the leader is equivalent to opposing Allah. With this one-sidedly constructed religious argument, Walid builds the legitimacy of a dominant discourse that forces the congregation to submit without room for criticism.

In addition to symbolic legitimacy through arguments, Walid also regulates the discourse of rituals and social practices. His foot-washing water is drunk by the congregation as a sign of his purity (episode 7), stoning punishment is given to teenagers caught alone without evidence of adultery (episode 6), and forced marriage of teenage girls with claims of being spiritual wives (episodes 10–14). These practices are wrapped in terms of purity, moral jihad, and purification, when in fact they are forms of physical violence and sexual domination that perpetuate Walid's authority. This tyranny discourse operates on three dimensions of power. First, symbolic, through mastery of religious language and manipulation of sacred texts to enforce blind obedience. Second, ritualistic, through the formation of strict and closed worship orders and internal rules. Third, physical, through violence, corporal punishment, and forced marriage as tools of control.

The resistance against Walid's dominant discourse is not spontaneous but grows from bitter experiences, injustice endured, and accumulated moral courage. Baiduri, as the main character, becomes the driving force of the counter-discourse, assisted by Hambali, a young member of the Jamaah Ummat educated in religious studies in Egypt, and Ummi Hafizah, Walid's first wife who begins to see the destructive ambition for power within the community. First, Baiduri serves as a critic based on facts and morality. Since episode 3, Baiduri starts to suspect and feel uneasy about Walid's practice of marrying off 16-year-old girls without family permission and without proper ethical and religious considerations. For Baiduri, religious dogma is not a justification for inhumane acts and injustice. When rumors of teenage

pregnancy begin to spread (episodes 10-14) and the victims are afraid to speak out, Baiduri emerges as a courageous voice voicing their suffering.

He arranges facts and evidence, gathers the victim's confession, and openly expresses his anxiety and criticism. His rejection of the Malay Night ritual as a momentum for forced marriage held by Walid to marry Baiduri is the peak of symbolic and theological rejection. Baiduri states that the ritual is not part of religion, but a manifestation of human greed disguised as religious justification. Secondly, Hambali forms rational and theological legitimacy. Hambali complements Baiduri's counter-discourse with rational and theological dimensions. He brings an argument framework based on true religious evidence, dismantling Walid's misinterpretation that demands obedience without reason. Hambali asserts that religion demands obedience based on justice and common sense, not absolute submission without reason.

In addition to verbal criticism, Hambali actively accompanied Baiduri in facing threats and violence. He played the role of a structural actor who organized resistance by collecting data on violations, compiling reports, and building collective awareness among community members who were beginning to become enlightened. Third, Ummi Hafizah is a Voice from Within the Patriarchal Structure. A major surprise in this resistance was the emergence of doubt from Ummi Hafizah, Walid's first wife. Until now, she was considered obedient and submissive to her husband's authority, thus holding a strong moral position in the community. After being approached by Baiduri and gaining insight into her husband's behavior, Ummi Hafizah began to become silent and reflective. She witnessed the destruction of the community caused by Walid's ambition and deviations.

In episode 14, Ummi Hafizah openly stated that Walid's behavior does not reflect the true teachings of religion. This statement became the most effective disruption tool because it came from a figure who had long supported the patriarchal structure and Walid's power. Ummi Hafizah then helped Baiduri and Hambali to bring in the police as a form of state intervention against the discourse of tyranny. Fourth, the finalization of the counter-discourse. Episode 15 became the climax of the dismantling of the discourse of tyranny. Walid forced Baiduri to become his wife after marrying his third wife, but Baiduri did not stop resisting. In a very pressured position, Baiduri remained persistent in gathering evidence and building solidarity among community members who had long been afraid to speak up.

The physical violence experienced by Baiduri and Hambali became a catalyst for collective awareness. The congregation, which had blindly obeyed until then, began to see the truth behind Walid's tyranny. When Ummi Hafizah also voiced criticism, the Jamaah Jihad Ummah community experienced a split and began to dismantle Walid's absolute legitimacy. The presence of the police was not merely a form of law enforcement but a symbol of the collapse of symbolic and social power that had been maintained through violence and manipulation of religious texts. The discourse built by Walid eventually lost its legitimacy, and the community slowly began to free itself from the domination of tyranny.

The film *Bidaah* is not just a narrative about the deviation of a religious leader but also depicts the complexity of dominant discourse and how counter-discourse becomes a saving mechanism within a closed community. Through Baiduri, we see that resistance can begin from a small voice brave enough to bring the truth, then grow into a collective awareness capable of overthrowing tyranny. With a strategy of moral courage, the use of objective facts, and support from moral figures such as Hambali and Ummi Hafizah, Baiduri transforms into a symbol of spiritual and social resistance. The counter-discourse built is not merely criticism but an effort to create a new space for justice, freedom, and humanity. In the context of religious discourse domination that often restricts freedom of thought, Baiduri's courage teaches us that resisting does not mean violating faith but rather saving dignity and human rights.

#### **4.4. Implications of the Tyranny of Da'wah in Bidaah**

The film *Bidaah* offers an intriguing depiction of the abuse of da'wah, where da'wah, which should serve as a means to guide people towards the righteous path, is instead used to oppress and control. This study identifies three main findings. First, da'wah in this film no longer functions as a spiritual mission but as a tool for social control. The congregation is coerced into accepting the teachings without question, even to the point where violence is justified in the name of religion. Second, da'wah in this film is portrayed as a dominant discourse that operates within three dimensions: micro, meso, and macro. At the micro level, the language of da'wah used by the character Walid Muhammad systematically reinforces the absolute nature of his teachings. At the meso level, da'wah is produced and consumed in a closed, ritualistic, and structured manner, leaving no space for dialogue or debate. The macro dimension shows how da'wah is used to uphold an unjust and exploitative social structure. Third, Baiduri emerges as a symbol of counter-discourse that opposes the tyranny of da'wah by constructing a counter-narrative that boldly challenges Walid's authority and exposes the injustices.

This study seeks to address how da'wah can be misused within the context of the film *Bidaah*. The findings reveal that da'wah, which should ideally be a guiding force, is instead used as a means to oppress and control, with violence being legitimized in the name of religion. Da'wah in this film not only leads to the formation of an absolute ideology but also strengthens social injustices that tend to be exploitative. The implications of this research for religious authorities are significant. The film serves as a reminder that da'wah must return to its original purpose: to guide the people with compassion, not to dominate or exploit. The abuse of da'wah, as depicted in *Bidaah*, can have detrimental effects on the public's perception of religion, leading to misunderstandings and exacerbating negative stereotypes. For the world of cinema, this film highlights the crucial role of media as a tool for social criticism that can open the public's eyes to the misuse of religion.

As filmmakers, it is important to exercise caution in representing religion to avoid falling into the traps of domination or manipulation. However, this study has its limitations, as it focuses on a single film that only offers a snapshot of how da'wah can be misused in a specific context. The research also emphasizes critical discourse analysis, while the psychological and emotional impact the film may have on the audience cannot be fully explored. Future research could broaden the scope by analyzing other films that address da'wah in different social contexts, both within Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Additionally, further studies could explore how these films influence the public's mindset and behavior in accepting or opposing religious ideologies and the role of media in shaping religious and social discourses in the modern world.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The film *Bidaah*, through the character Baiduri, successfully presents a strong representation of symbolic resistance against the dominant discourse of religious tyranny led by Walid Muhammad. Baiduri, who was initially trapped in a restrictive preaching system, gradually becomes aware of the injustice and oppression occurring. This critical awareness drives her to challenge the legitimacy of the authority that has long been regarded as absolute while dismantling the singular narrative that justifies such absolute power. In Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, Baiduri's changes in language and actions become a counter-discourse that challenges and breaks down the oppressive power structure. Baiduri's resistance occurs not only at the linguistic level but also at the level of social practice, symbolically rejecting rules and rituals that restrict individual freedom, especially for women. This process is also supported by cinematic visual representation that emphasizes Baiduri's psychological and ideological transformation through lighting

and scene framing. The character Hambali also strengthens the narrative of resistance by showing a critical attitude towards religious authority that has long been absolute.

On a macro level, this film reveals how religion and preaching can be distorted into tools of repressive power while also showing that dominant discourse is not something final and unshakable. The symbolic resistance of Baiduri and Hambali indicates the potential to dismantle the structure of religious tyranny through critical awareness and collective action. Thus, Bidaah invites viewers to reflect on religious practices that have long been accepted without criticism and encourages the formation of counter-discourse as a form of resistance against spiritual tyranny. The film asserts that freedom and justice in religion can only be achieved if religious authority can be questioned and constructively criticized.

## Reference

- Amin, A. M., & Hidayat, M. (2024). Film Siksa Kubur sebagai medium diskursus sosial-agama: Menimbang representasi dan memaknai kritik. *At-Tabsyir: Jurnal Komunikasi Penyiaran Islam*, 11(2), 313–332.
- Amin, F., & Sururi, A. A. (2025). Dakwah digital: Mengukur dampak dan efektivitas kampanye dakwah online terhadap audiens muda. *Progresif: Jurnal Dakwah, Sosial, dan Komunikasi*, 2(1), 1–13.
- Ayub, M. A., & Hussain, I. (2023). An overview of the dawah of Islam in the West and the role of Dr Muhammad Hameedullah. *Al Manhal Research Journal*, 3(2), 11–40.
- Azzahra, K., Harahap, N. I., Triansyah, H., & Marzuki. (2025). Gerakan sosial keagamaan dan politik era Mekkah: Penelitian. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat dan Riset Pendidikan*, 4(1), 918–926.
- Esparagoza, C., & Baybado, P. J. (2025). Cross communion paradigm: Reimagining liberation theology from the perspective of the Catholic Church. *Philippine Association for the Sociology of Religion Journal*, 5(1), 46–79.
- Fairclough, N. (2023). *Critical discourse analysis*. Milton Park: Routledge.
- Gunawan, C., Sirojuddin, & Yasin, R. (2025). Islam rahmatan lil alamin and the role of da'wah in building social harmony in the era of globalization. *Spektra: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial*, 7(1), 154–165.
- Hair, M., Ernanda, E., & Izar, J. (2024). Representasi tokoh perempuan dalam film 3 Srikandi karya Iman Brotoseno: Kajian analisis wacana kritis Norman Fairclough. *Kajian Linguistik dan Sastra*, 3(3), 392–410.
- Hamdani, F., Nurchamidah, & Bakhit, M. E. (2025). Penanaman nilai toleransi pada anak melalui sinema animasi: Studi analisis karakter tokoh sinema Upin dan Ipin. *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Religious Education*, 3(1), 87–100.
- Hamilton, L. S., Oganian, Y., Hall, J., & Chang, E. (2021). Parallel and distributed encoding of speech across human auditory cortex. *Cell*, 184(18), 4626–4639.
- Hefner, R. W. (2025). The social scientific study of Islam in Indonesia: A 75 year retrospective. *Studia Islamika*, 32(1), 9–42.
- Hidayatullah, R. (2024). Otoritas keagamaan digital: Pembentukan otoritas Islam baru di ruang digital. *Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin*, 10(2), 1–12.
- Huda, A. S., Nafsika, S. S., & Salman. (2023). Film sebagai media dalam mengubah cara pandang manusia dalam prinsip kemanusiaan. *Irama: Jurnal Seni Desain dan Pembelajarannya*, 5(1), 9–14.
- Huda, M. K. (2024). Strategi dakwah lintas budaya dalam menghormati keberagaman dan membangun komunikasi efektif. *Meyarsa: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi dan Dakwah*, 5(2), 158–168.
- Jørgensen, K., Frederiksen, J., Watson, E., Hansen, M., & Karlsson, B. (2025). Health professionals on cross-sectoral collaboration between mental health hospitals and municipalities: A critical discourse analysis. *Nursing Inquiry*, 32(1), 1–14.
- Kadir, S., & Kamal. (2025). Pergeseran pemikiran Islam di era digital, tantangan dan peluang bagi Muslim milenial. *Iqra: Jurnal Ilmu Kependidikan dan Keislaman*, 20(2), 153–163.

- Kamraju, M. (2025). The evolving role of religion in modern society: Influence, challenges, and paths toward coexistence. *ASEAN Journal of Religion, Education, and Society*, 4(1), 67–74.
- Khoir, M. A., & Anshory, M. I. (2023). Toleransi dan prinsip-prinsip hubungan antarumat beragama dalam perspektif dakwah Islam. *Pawarta: Journal of Communication and Da'wah*, 1(2), 55–81.
- Kumari, F. (2022). Kesetaraan gender dalam agama-agama: Analisis filsafat Taoisme-Islam Sachiko Murata. *Muadalah*, 10(2), 65–77.
- Linze, L., & Desa, M. M. (2024). Exploring the intersection of religion and cinema: Trends and reflections in contemporary film culture. *Journal of Ecohumanism*, 3(4), 225–235.
- Mahya, M. J., & Waluyajati, R. S. (2025). Islam and the values of multicultural da'wah: Concept and social practice. *Busyru: Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi Islam*, 6(2), 180–192.
- Munandar, A., & Susanti, E. (2024). The contribution of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in strengthening democracy in Indonesia: A study of moderate Islamic politics. *ALMUSTOFA: Journal of Islamic Studies and Research*, 1(1), 123–136.
- Muragmi, M. F. (2024). From popularity to spirituality. *Jurnal Dakwah*, 25(2), 41–70.
- Muthmainnah, F. (2023). Mengajarkan modernitas di tengah perubahan interaksi sosial dalam film. *Journal of Religion and Film*, 2(2), 340–353.
- Oliver, W. H., & Oliver, E. (2023). God as one, with reference to Barth and the perichoresis doctrine. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 44(1), Article 2711.
- Pešić, M. (2022). Critical discourse analysis as a critical social study: Norman Fairclough's approach. *Политичка ревија*, 74, 89–113.
- Pingge, M. M., Robot, M., & Jama, K. B. (2023). Analisis wacana kritis model Norman Fairclough dalam film pendek Amalake karya Langit Jingga Films. *Bianglala Linguistika: Jurnal Linguistik*, 11(2), 57–66.
- Pratiwi, C. S., & Sunaryo, S. (2021). Blasphemy law as a structural violence: A challenge for maintaining sustainable peace. *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights*, 18(1), 133–165.
- Ritonga, M. T. (2021). Imam Mahdi dalam perspektif hadis. *Al-Kaffah: Jurnal Kajian Nilai-Nilai Keislaman*, 9(1), 69–86.
- Riyanti, E. D. (2023). The philosophical basis of critical discourse analysis. *Kanz Philosophia: A Journal for Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*, 9(2), 371–394.
- Rizal, D. A., Maula, R., & Idamatussilmi, N. (2024). Transformasi media sosial dalam digitalisasi agama: Media dakwah dan wisata religi. *Mukaddimah: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 9(2), 206–230.
- Rusdi, I. A., Soheh, M., & Mujiburrahman. (2025). Otoritas wahyu sebagai ukuran kebenaran dalam konsepsi teologi. *Al-Ihda': Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pemikiran*, 20(1), 1913–1929.
- Salam, M. A., Rhain, A., & Nurrohm, A. (2024). Challenges of da'wah research: Understanding da'wah models in the context of Qur'anic guidance and social change. *al-Afkar, Journal for Islamic Studies*, 7(3), 1120–1141.
- Sevindi, K. (2021). Ideological discourse analysis in soviet animation cinema. *Turkish Online Journal of Design Art and Communication*, 11(2), 594–605.
- Shehab, A. (2023). Film as a tool of ideology. *Hermes*, 12(1), 31–63.
- Syukur, S., & Huda, M. (2025). The meaning of Sunnah and Bid'ah in an Islamic perspective. *Eduvest-Journal of Universal Studies*, 5(5), 5465–5473.
- Tungkagi, D. Q. (2024). Pudarnya peran otoritas keagamaan lokal: Studi atas Buatulo Syara'a di Provinsi Gorontalo. *Jurnal Pendidikan, Kebudayaan dan Keislaman*, 3(1), 7–24.
- Wahyono, Z., Gamon, A., & Shah, M. A. (2024). Religious tolerance in Southeast Asia: Issues and challenges. *Al-Itqan: Journal of Islamic Sciences and Comparative Studies*, 9(2), 24–53.
- Wahyudi, & Solehudin, E. (2025). Ijma' sebagai sumber hukum: Antara konsensus ulama dan dinamika zaman. *Equality: Journal of Islamic Law*, 3(2), 47–64.
- Wessels, W. (2022). Identity, power, and responsibility: Reflections on prophetic preaching in South Africa. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal*, 8(2), 1–22.
- Yulianto, H. B. (2020). Nalar kemanusiaan dalam da'wah multikultural: Upaya memformulasikan pesan dakwah humanis. *Jurnal Darussalam: Jurnal Pendidikan, Komunikasi dan Pemikiran Hukum Islam*, 12(1), 72–93.
- Zhang, W.-B. (2023). *Desires, hidden motives, manipulations, and trust*. Lanham: Lexington.
- Zulkarnain, Y., & Rohimah, S. (2024). Analysis of Surah Al-Imran 104 in the context of social leadership. *Pawarta: Journal of Communication and Da'wah*, 2(1), 29–40.

### ***Acknowledgment***

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of individuals who supported the completion of this article.

### ***Funding Information***

This research did not receive any funding.

### ***Conflict of Interest Statement***

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

### ***Ethical Approval and Originality Statement***

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

### ***Data Disclosure Statement***

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors.

This work is licensed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>).