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From Spirituality to Social Empowerment: The Role of Islamic Dakwah and Sufism in Contemporary Community Development in Southeast Asia

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual study develops the Spiritual-Social Dakwah (SSD) Framework, a normative-analytical paradigm that reorients Islamic dakwah and community development in contemporary Southeast Asia. Employing a qualitative-conceptual design grounded in interpretive analysis of classical Islamic scholarship and a thematic review of recent literature, the SSD Framework integratively synthesizes Sufistic spirituality, *fiqh al-dakwah* (jurisprudence of preaching), *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (objectives of Islamic law), and *wasatiyyah* (moderation) into a holistic model of faith-based empowerment. It bridges the persistent divide between personal piety and socio-economic transformation through three operational domains: *tazkiyah* (spiritual-ethical formation), *ta'āwun* (collaborative social engagement), and *taḥāwwur* (institutional-digital innovation). While conceptually rooted in the Indonesian context, the framework engages comparative insights from across Southeast Asia and acknowledges implementation challenges, particularly the risk of instrumentalizing spirituality within development agendas. The SSD model aligns Islamic ethical values with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), offering a coherent theoretical foundation for transforming mosques and majelis taklim (Qur'anic study groups) into hubs of inclusive social empowerment. Its principal contribution lies in renewing dakwah epistemology from predominantly ritual discourse toward socially embedded and institutionally adaptive praxis while outlining a strategic agenda for future empirical validation,

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cross-regional comparison, and the development of context-sensitive impact indicators for faith-based community development.

Keywords: Islamic Dakwah; Spiritual-Social Dakwah; Sufism; *Fiqh al-Dakwah*; *Maqāsid al-sharī'ah*; Community Empowerment; Southeast Asia; SDGs

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, the narrative of inevitable secularization has been challenged by the continuing and dynamic role of religion in the public sphere^[1]. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Southeast Asia. This region is not only rich in religious diversity but also increasingly recognizes religious actors as key partners in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)^[2, 3]. As the majority religion in several Southeast Asian countries, Islam has enormous potential to drive community development. However, a persistent gap remains between the rich spiritual capital of Muslim communities and its transformation into structured and sustainable forms of social empowerment. It is this gap that calls for a new paradigm capable of bridging individual piety with collective social transformation. For instance, according to the United Nations Development Programme (2025), nearly one-third of Indonesia's urban population remains economically vulnerable despite significant development progress. Similarly, according to a Pew Research Center report (2023), Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia demonstrate a strong connection between religion and national identity^[4, 5].

The fundamental problem faced is the dichotomy in approach. On the one hand, traditional Islamic preaching often prioritizes adherence to rituals and doctrinal purity, sometimes neglecting pressing socio-economic realities such as urban poverty, inequality, and social fragmentation^[6]. On the other hand, the modern development paradigm, while superior in technical solutions, often neglects the deep motivational and ethical resources that are embedded in local spiritual traditions. The discourse on "Socially Engaged Islam" has indeed begun to emerge^[7], and the transformative role of Sufism in fostering peace and moderation has also been recognized^[8, 9]. However, few studies offer a coherent framework integrating the foundations of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) in dakwah with the transformative ethics of Sufism to create a holistic model of community development. Addressing this critical gap constitutes the core aim of this study. Thus, there is a pressing

need to articulate a theoretical synthesis that bridges spiritual ethics, Islamic jurisprudence, and social transformation—an approach that reflects both local authenticity and universal relevance. Both the Western Protestant ethic and Southeast Asian Sufism originally emphasized balance between spiritual devotion and material responsibility. This comparison draws on Weber's seminal analysis of the Western Protestant ethic and its socio-economic implications^[10, 11]. In different historical contexts, however, both traditions experienced distortions that separated ethical spirituality from socio-economic praxis. This comparison is employed not as a historical parallel, but as a conceptual lens to highlight how ethical spirituality, when detached from social praxis, risks losing its transformative capacity.

Based on this background, this conceptual study is driven by three interconnected research questions: (1) How can the principles of Islamic preaching and Sufi spirituality be synthesized into a cohesive framework for contemporary community development in Southeast Asia? (2) What is the role of existing Islamic social institutions (such as mosques and women's majelis taklim: Quranic study groups) as agents of this spiritual-social empowerment? (3) How does this integrated model contribute to addressing key development challenges and advancing the SDGs in the context of Southeast Asia?

Accordingly, this article proposes a new conceptual framework termed the 'Spiritual-Social Dakwah' model. The novelty of this article lies in its interdisciplinary synthesis at three levels. Theoretically, this article bridges Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh Dakwah*), Sufi philosophy^[9, 10], and modern development theory^[3]. Institutionally, this article redefines the role of core Islamic institutions—specifically, the mosque as a multifunctional center for empowerment^[12] and women's majelis taklim as central agents of social change^[13]. Contextually, this model is embedded in the unique socio-cultural and religious milieu of Southeast Asia, transcending Middle Eastern or Western-centered development models.

The significance of this research is threefold. Its theoretical contribution enriches the academic discourse on reli-

gion and development by presenting a faith-based model that is both spiritually robust and socially relevant. Its practical contribution offers actionable insights to Islamic scholars, Islamic organizations, and policymakers in Southeast Asia for designing more effective, culturally resonant, and sustainable community development programs. At the societal level, by leveraging the extensive networks and moral authority of Islamic institutions, the proposed model offers a viable pathway toward more resilient, inclusive, and empowered Muslim communities, in line with the broader goals of SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). While Middle Eastern and Western studies on Islamic development have largely emphasized political theology or welfare economics, Southeast Asia offers a distinct laboratory where spirituality, gender inclusion, and grassroots dakwah (Islamic preaching) intertwine within plural and democratic settings—a context that remains underexplored in global scholarship^[3].

2. The Spiritual-Social Dakwah (Islamic Preaching) Paradigm in Southeast Asian Community Development

In the face of the complexity of contemporary development challenges in Southeast Asia, this study constructs a conceptual model that integrates the intellectual heritage of classical Islamic scholarship with contemporary discourses on community empowerment. As Berger (2017) notes, the world is experiencing desecularization, with religion again playing a significant role in public space^[1]. In the midst of this wave, Islam in Southeast Asia faces both challenges and significant opportunities to contribute to sustainable development, as illustrated by Nikmah et al. (2024) in their study on the humanitarian perspective in this region. This analytical lens introduces the Spiritual–Social Dakwah (SSD) orientation, a novel synthesis that connects Islamic jurisprudence, Sufi ethics, and sustainable development principles in the Southeast Asian context^[2].

2.1. Embroidering *Fiqh* and Sufism in the Frame of *Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*

Our theoretical construct departs from Imam al-Ghazali's deep thoughts on the integration of sharia and

essence. In *Ihya Ulumuddin*, al-Ghazali emphasizes that “knowledge without charity is like a tree without fruit, while charity without knowledge is like a building without a foundation.” We operationalize this principle through the concept of *Fiqh Dakwah* developed by Anim and Uyuni (2024), which not only touches on the legal-formal aspects of dakwah but also delves into the dimension of purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) as the basis for social transformation^[14].

Al-Ghazali's thought is relevant to the current context through the development of Neo-Sufism, as elaborated by Hakim (2024)^[9]. Neo-Sufism is no longer just an individual spiritual practice, but a social dakwah paradigm that responds to the challenges of modernity. This is in line with the concept of socially engaged Islam raised by Bagasra (2021), which emphasizes social justice-based activism and altruism in the Muslim community^[7]. Building upon this philosophical base, the next dimension explores how Sufism functions as a moral and social force in contemporary Muslim societies. This synthesis of law and spirituality establishes the ethical foundation upon which Sufism operates as a social force, as explored in the next section.

2.2. Sufism as the Basis of Social Ethics and Counter-Radicalism

Building upon this ethical synthesis, the subsequent discussion elaborates on how Sufism evolves from a personal path to a social ethic that shapes collective resilience. Sufism is understood here not merely as Islam's esoteric dimension, but as a potent ethical force fostering social resilience against radicalism. As Ahmad et al. (2021) show, Sufi institutions in Indonesia have played a role as a bulwark against religious radicalism^[8]. These findings are reinforced by Bindaniji and Fuadi (2022), who reveal how Sufism contributes to religious moderation^[15].

Faruque (2023) reminds us of Sufism's philosophical tradition, which emphasizes self-awareness and self-cultivation as the basis for social change^[10]. In the urban context, Atamimi and Sururi (2025) show the multifunctional role of urban Sufism in building the religiosity of modern society^[16]. Meanwhile, Wijaya et al. (2025) identify the integration of Sufism into contemporary Indonesian Islam across both urban and rural communities^[17].

2.3. From the Mosque to the Digital Space

At the operational level, our approach integrates empirical findings by Hamid et al. (2024) on the transformation of mosque functions, where mosques are no longer merely spiritual centers but have become nodes of economic empowerment^[18]. This transformation resonates with the concept of the Medan community as an ideal prototype examined by Uyuni and Muhibudin (2020)^[19]

In the digital era, the transformation of dakwah media has opened new spaces, such as virtual taklim assemblies. This digital sphere further strengthens urban Islamic sisterhood, as evidenced by an anthropological study on the role of women in social change^[13].

2.4. Wasathiyah (Islamic Moderation) Framework and Sustainable Development

This schema also considers the characteristics of Southeast Asian Islam, specifically wasathiyah (moderate), as studied by Faiz and Nida' Fadlan (2022)^[20]. This moderate pattern is the basis for Islam's contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), given that, as Sekarlangit and Wardhani (2021) show, disclosure of the SDGs in Southeast Asia still needs improvement^[21].

Tadros et al. (2023) remind us of the complexity of the relationship between poverty, prejudice, and religious inequality in sustainable development^[3]. In this context, the concept of *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* in millennial dakwah developed by Adnan and Uyuni (2021) offers a relevant approach^[22].

2.5. Bridging Spirituality and Development

Ultimately, this model synthesizes four interrelated dimensions: Sufistic spirituality as the basis of social ethics, *Fiqh Dakwah* as an operational framework, *Maqāsid al-sharī'ah* as a development compass, Wasathiyah as a character approach^[22]. Kiliyamannil (2023) reminded that Islamic studies in Asia need to be reoriented from a global–local dichotomy towards an interlocking regional approach^[23]. This approach forms the basis for the SSD Framework in understanding Southeast Asian Islam as a dynamic space for socio-religious innovation. Thus, we offer a spiritual-social dakwah paradigm that is not only individually transforma-

tive but also systemic in its impact on community building in Southeast Asia. As the wisdom goes, change must begin within but should not end there—this framework seeks to embody that principle through actionable spiritual-social transformation. Hence, the Spiritual–Social Dakwah approach not only embodies Islam's transformative vision but also offers a localized yet globally relevant model for integrating spirituality and sustainable development.

2.6. Preliminary Challenges and Considerations

However, the operationalization of this integrative SSD paradigm is not without its preliminary challenges. Translating spiritual ethics into measurable social outcomes requires navigating complex terrain. First, there is the risk of instrumentalization, where profound spiritual concepts are reduced to mere tools for developmental targets, potentially diluting their transformative essence. Scholars like Owusu and Agyemang (2025) caution against faith-based development initiatives that prioritize efficiency over spiritual integrity, arguing that the 'sacred' must not be wholly subsumed by the 'profane' logic of project management^[24]. Second, the diverse and pluralistic landscape of Southeast Asia itself presents a challenge. The model must be sufficiently flexible to adapt to the distinct political, cultural, and Islamic legal traditions of Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Southern Thailand, and the Philippines, while maintaining its core principles. As Engelcke (2021) observes, the implementation of Islamic ethical frameworks in public policy across the region varies significantly, influenced by colonial history, state-religion relations, and local civil society dynamics^[25].

Furthermore, the SSD Framework invites a critical re-examination of the role of the *dai* (preacher) or community leader. Moving beyond the traditional role of a sermon-giver, the SSD envisions a 'socially-embedded spiritual architect'. This requires a new kind of literacy—one that combines deep Islamic knowledge with competencies in community organizing, social enterprise, and digital communication. The success of the model hinges on the capacity of these agents to facilitate the *Tazkiyah-Ta'awun* link, helping individuals see their spiritual refinement as intrinsically connected to communal welfare. This aligns with Tran's (2021) concept of "religio-social entrepreneurship," which highlights the emerging trend of religious leaders innovatively bridging

worship services with social service provision^[26]. Acknowledging these challenges is not a weakness of the framework but a necessary step for its realistic refinement and contextual adaptation. The subsequent sections on Methods and Results will detail how the SSD Framework is constructed to be cognizant of these very issues, aiming for a balanced, authentic, and impactful synthesis.

3. Methods

This study employs a qualitative-conceptual approach using a theoretical model development design. Although conceptual in nature, the development of the Spiritual-Social Dakwah (SSD) model underwent theoretical refinement through focused discussions with selected dakwah figures and community empowerment practitioners in Indonesia, complemented by in-depth analysis of relevant classical and contemporary works.

The primary data sources consist of two main categories. First, an interpretive textual analysis of classical Islamic scholarship—particularly the writings of Imam al-Ghazali and the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*—which inform the ethical and spiritual foundations of dakwah. The interpretive textual analysis of classical sources was guided by the hermeneutic approach of understanding (*al-fahm*) and application (*al-tatbiq*), seeking to extract enduring ethical principles relevant to contemporary social challenges rather than literalist interpretations. This involved close reading of key texts, such as Al-Ghazali's *Ihya* and classical treatises on *maqāṣid*, to identify core concepts like *tazkiyah*, *maslahah* (public benefit), and *'adl* (justice). These concepts were then decontextualized from their historical milieu and recontextualized within the framework of modern community development discourse.

Second, a selective and thematic review of contemporary literature (2018–2024), without claiming exhaustiveness, aimed at theoretical synthesis addressing social Sufism, *dakwah fiqh*, and Muslim community development, with a particular focus on the Indonesian and broader Southeast Asian context. This review does not aim at completeness but at conceptual integration relevant to the SSD Framework. The thematic review of contemporary literature followed a structured process. Academic databases (e.g., Scopus and Google Scholar) were searched using keywords including

“social Sufism,” “Islamic civil society,” “mosque-based development,” and “faith-based organizations in Southeast Asia.” Literature was selected based on its relevance to bridging spirituality and social action, with a conscious effort to include scholarly works from both within and outside the region to avoid insularity. This body of literature was analyzed to identify recurring themes, empirical gaps, and potential points of integration with the classical ethical corpus.

The analytical process was conducted in four systematic stages: Conceptual exploration, identifying theoretical roots from both classical and modern Islamic intellectual traditions; Preliminary validation, through focused consultations with practitioners to assess the contextual resonance of emerging ideas; Integrative synthesis, merging theoretical insights into a coherent SSD construct; Model refinement, based on practitioner feedback and critical engagement with recent literature. These discussions were informal, exploratory, and non-systematic, intended solely for contextual resonance rather than empirical validation.

The study acknowledges certain limitations, notably the geographically limited consultations within Indonesia and reliance on available secondary sources without claiming exhaustive regional representation. Nevertheless, conceptual rigor was maintained through theoretical triangulation, logical coherence, and alignment with empirical findings cited in existing research.

Although the SSD Framework has not yet undergone full empirical validation, it serves as a robust conceptual foundation for subsequent field-based studies. It contributes theoretically to the discourse on Islamic dakwah and Muslim community development in Southeast Asia.

4. Results

The conceptual and integrative analysis in this study led to a new framework, the Spiritual–Social Dakwah (SSD) Framework. This framework serves as a theoretical model that connects classical Islamic spirituality, Sufi social ethics, and the paradigm of sustainable development in the context of Southeast Asian society. SSD views dakwah not just as an activity of spreading teachings, but as a transformative process that integrates the values of faith, charity, and *ihsan* (spiritual excellence) in strengthening the social capacity of the people.

4.1. Foundational Dimension: Spirituality as the Basis of Social Ethics

The first dimension of SSD is sophisticated spirituality, which serves as the basis for social ethics. Referring to the view of Imam al-Ghazali in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, the purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) is a prerequisite for the birth of a just and civilized society. Thus, spirituality is not a private domain, but rather a moral energy that fosters solidarity, empathy, and social responsibility. In the context of dakwah, this dimension functions as a mechanism for internalizing values that lead to social transformation rooted in divine awareness. Based on this spirituality, the next stage demands how classical Islamic ethics can be integrated with the empowerment mechanisms of modern society. This foundational spirituality thus underpins the next dimension, where ethical values evolve into frameworks of empowerment and transformation.

4.2. Integration of Classical Ethics and Contemporary Empowerment

The second dimension shows the integration of classical Islamic ethics with the empowerment approach to modern society. Through *maqāsid al-sharī'ah*, especially the protection of faith (*hifz al-dīn*), reason (*hifz al-'aql*), and human dignity (*hifz al-nafs*), dakwah is directed to be a social practice that fosters independence, justice, and sustainability. Within the framework of SSD, the values of *fiqh dakwah* are contextualized as transformative social actions that bridge spiritual and structural gaps and make mosques and communities the center of change. From the integration of values and praxis, an operational domain of dakwah emerged, enabling the practical application of SSD across various social levels.

4.3. Operational Domain of Spiritual-Social Dakwah

Building on this integration, the SSD Framework operationalizes its concepts through three interconnected domains: (1) *Tazkiyah* (spiritual purification–Personal transformation), through strengthening spiritual literacy, ethics, and social awareness. (2) *Ta'awun* (mutual social cooperation–Social cohesion), by building a network of solidarity through zakat (almsgiving), productive waqf (religious endowment), and

economic movements of the people. (3) *Taṭāwwur* (institutional innovation–Dakwah institutions), namely the transformation of mosques and digital spaces into inclusive spiritual and social development centers. This theoretical synthesis resulted in three interconnected operational domains, which are not only conceptual but are supported by findings reported in existing empirical literature.

4.3.1. *Tazkiyah* (Spiritual Purification) [Transformative-Individual] Domain

This domain focuses on strengthening spiritual literacy, ethics, and social awareness as the foundation for change. Its programs include self-purification training and moral development that internalize social values. Beyond generic training, the *Tazkiyah* domain finds expression in programs like “Pesantren Kilat Plus” in West Java, which combine Quranic recitation with workshops on environmental stewardship (*hifz al-bi'ah* as an extension of *maqāsid*), fostering an eco-conscious piety.

4.3.2. *Ta'awun* (Mutual Cooperation) [Collaborative-Social] Domain

This domain realizes solidarity through collective action, such as empowering zakat (obligatory almsgiving) and productive waqf (Islamic endowment) management, as well as the economic movement of the ummah (Muslim community)^[27]. A real example is the transformation of mosques into centers of economic empowerment, as researched by Hamid et al. (2024), which drive community micro-businesses^[18]. In Southern Thailand, the network of pondok (traditional Islamic schools) has been pivotal in community development. Some pondoks have established community cooperatives that manage collective savings, provide interest-free loans (*qard al-hasan*), and market local handicrafts, directly operationalizing *Ta'awun* for economic resilience amidst socio-political challenges.

4.3.3. *Taṭāwwur* (Institutional Innovation) [Innovative-Institutional] Domain

This domain transforms traditional dakwah institutions into centers of inclusive and adaptive spiritual and social development. Innovations include utilizing digital spaces for dakwah, such as virtual taklim assemblies, which have been proven to strengthen the role of women as agents of social change^[13]. In Malaysia, the “Smart Mosque” initiative by certain state religious councils exemplifies

Taṭāwwur. These mosques integrate digital platforms for religious learning, e-zakat collection, and booking of community spaces for skills workshops, thereby transforming the physical mosque into a hybrid spiritual-digital civic hub.

These three domains show that spirituality and social development are not two separate entities, but two sides of one whole dakwah process.

4.4. Theoretical Implications and Contextual Relevance

The SSD Framework offers important theoretical implications for the development of contemporary dakwah discourse. First, it provides a new analytical lens that explains the mutual relationship between spirituality and social development. Second, the SSD is an open conceptual model that can be empirically validated through field studies in various regions of Southeast Asia. Third, it has the potential to become an alternative paradigm for strengthening faith-based development, emphasizing the balance among the transcendental, social, and ecological dimensions. Thus, SSD is not only a model of dakwah, but also an integral approach to the sustainable development of Muslim societies. These findings are also in line with the findings of Hoffmann et al.

(2025), which show a positive correlation between religious participation and social peace^[28]. The SSD Framework reinforces this view by placing spirituality as the foundation of cross-community solidarity. Given the conceptual nature of this study, the “results” presented here refer to analytical outcomes in the form of an integrative theoretical framework rather than empirical measurements.

4.5. SSD Model Contributions

Overall, the SSD Framework (**Figure 1**) affirms that spiritual-social dakwah is not just a religious expression, but a value-based development strategy that bridges spiritual ethics and social welfare. By incorporating *maqāsid al-sharī’ah* (objectives of Islamic law), *dakwah fiqh*, and *wasathiyah*, this model formulates a contextual dakwah paradigm for Southeast Asia: spiritual in orientation, social in implementation, and sustainable in its results. This synthesis was a significant theoretical contribution to the research, opening the way for future cross-border empirical research. In sum, the SSD Framework contributes a novel theoretical synthesis that integrates Islamic spirituality with the contemporary discourse of sustainable development, offering a scalable model for further interdisciplinary and cross-regional studies.



Figure 1. SSD Framework: A Transformative Integration of Spiritual Ethics and Social Development in Southeast Asian Muslim Communities.

Source: Authors’ conceptual synthesis.

5. Discussion

This study presents the Spiritual-Social Dakwah Framework (SSD) to address a theoretical gap in the study of dakwah and the development of Southeast Asian Muslim com-

munities. This discussion expands the meaning of dakwah beyond a religious communication activity to a praxis of social transformation grounded in spirituality. Through three main domains—*Tazkiyah al-Nafs* (spiritual purification), *Ta’awun* (social collaboration), and *Taṭāwwur* (institutional innova-

tion)—SSD presents a new paradigm that connects spiritual ethics with the social structure and practice of contemporary development.

5.1. Reinterpreting the Relationship between Spirituality and Social Action

The SSD Framework fundamentally challenges the classic dichotomy between spirituality and social action that often marks modern dakwah studies. This framework shows that religious experience is not merely an individual expression, but a foundation for the formation of a sustainable social ethic. This expands Barzegar and Raji's (2021) critique of spirituality trapped in inward religiosity and extends beyond the framework of Hakim (2024), who highlights Neo-Sufism's potential as a social paradigm by offering an operational model that integrates spiritual values into the social system^[9, 29].

The most significant of these findings is its ability to contextualize classical concepts such as *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* into contemporary social action. This approach responds to the call of Tadros et al. (2023) to develop a development paradigm sensitive to religious values without abandoning the principles of social justice^[3]. Thus, the SSD Framework positions spirituality not on the fringes of development, but as the epicenter of ethics and the orientation of religious social policy^[3]. Herrero (2023) emphasizes that theopolitical figures act as mediators between revelation and community. In this context, the dai who implement the SSD Framework perform a similar charismatic function—channeling divine values into social praxis^[30].

5.2. SSD Framework in the Context of Indonesia and Southeast Asia

The application of the *Tatāwwur* (Institutional Innovation) domain demonstrates that the transformation of traditional dakwah institutions is an ongoing reality in Indonesia and across Southeast Asia. Uyuni et al.'s (2024) study on virtual taklim assemblies and Hamid et al.'s (2024) research on the transformation of mosques into economic empowerment centers demonstrate concrete forms of SSD implementation in praxis^[13, 18]. These findings strengthen the thesis of Faiz and Nida' Fadlan (2022) that *the wasathiyah* character of Southeast Asian Islam acts as a catalyst for harmony between

tradition and modernity^[20].

However, this research also reveals a complex dynamic: how can dakwah institutions balance spiritual authenticity and institutional modernization? How is the tension between the continuity of tradition and social innovation managed without losing religious legitimacy? These questions open new horizons for cross-border research, especially in Malaysia, Brunei, and Southern Thailand, which have distinct socio-religious configurations. Thus, SSD is not only an Indonesia-centric model but also a conceptual framework for the regionalization of the Southeast Asian dakwah paradigm.

5.3. Contribution to the Discourse on Sustainable Development

The SSD Framework also makes a significant conceptual contribution to the discourse on sustainable development. By grounding social ethics in spirituality, this framework bridges the discourse of global development—which tends to be secular—with Islamic values oriented towards balance (*tawāzun*) and benefit (*maṣlahah*). These findings support Nikmah et al.'s (2024) argument for the urgency of humanizing faith-based development in Southeast Asia and provide a concrete operational map for integrating these values into social policies^[2]. The domain of *Ta'awun* (Social Collaboration) is the connecting element between spirituality and development. The concepts of zakat, productive waqf, and social solidarity are not merely religious rituals but also serve as mechanisms for equitable economic distribution. This aligns with the findings of Assaidi et al. (2024) on the potential of zakat fintech, but SSD enriches its ethical and spiritual dimensions. Thus, the SSD Framework presents an *integrative-holistic approach* that can correct the fragmentation between religious and structural dimensions in sustainable development.

5.4. Theoretical Implications and Future Research Directions

Theoretically, the SSD Framework offers significant cross-disciplinary contributions to the sociology of religion, development studies, and dakwah science. Grounded in the Indonesian socio-religious context, SSD demonstrates that religiosity can serve as a constructive force in modern so-

cial life—contrary to the secularization thesis that predicts the diminishing public role of religion. Indonesia’s long-standing tradition of community-based piety, mass religious organizations, and strong civil society institutions provides a fertile setting where spirituality, social cooperation, and institutional innovation interact dynamically.

In development studies, SSD advances an alternative paradigm to Western-centric models by foregrounding faith-based agency and ethical–spiritual values in shaping social transformation. Indonesia’s unique hybrid of spirituality, democracy, and community participation offers a template that resonates with other Muslim-majority societies in Southeast Asia—particularly Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Southern Thailand, and Mindanao in the southern Philippines—where religious identity is likewise intertwined with social organization and grassroots empowerment.

Within dakwah science, SSD reframes dakwah from a discourse-centered activity to a holistic praxis encompassing *Tazkiyah* (spiritual formation), *Ta’awun* (collaborative social empowerment), and *Taṭāwwur* (institutional innovation). This framework positions Indonesian dakwah as a strategic contributor to broader social development, showing how religious ethics can cultivate civic responsibility, strengthen social cohesion, and promote sustainable community resilience. Developing these indicators requires a participatory and culturally-grounded approach. Potential metrics for the *Ta’awun* domain, for instance, could include: (1) the percentage of mosque/*majelis taklim* budgets allocated to social programs versus operational costs; (2) the diversity of beneficiaries (across gender, age, ethnicity) of zakat and waqf-funded projects; and (3) the number of collaborative partnerships formed between Islamic institutions and secular development agencies. For the *Tazkiyah* domain, innovative methods like pre- and post-program reflective journals or scales measuring changes in perceived social responsibility among participants could be explored. Establishing such a metrics framework is crucial for transitioning the SSD model from a compelling theoretical construct into a tool for accountable and evidence-based practice.

Looking ahead, further research is needed in several directions. First, empirical studies should examine how SSD domains operate across Indonesia’s diverse socio-religious ecologies, from pesantren networks to urban Muslim commu-

nities. Second, comparative research with similar contexts in Malaysia, Brunei, Southern Thailand, and Mindanao can clarify the model’s adaptability and highlight shared regional dynamics. Third, the development of standardized indicators is essential for measuring the impact of SSD-based initiatives, particularly with respect to SDG-related outcomes such as poverty alleviation, gender equity, and inclusive governance. Finally, interdisciplinary inquiry is necessary to explore how youth religiosity, digital activism, and emergent Islamic movements are reshaping the future trajectory of spiritual–social dakwah in Indonesia and beyond.

6. Conclusions

This study establishes the Spiritual-Social Dakwah (SSD) Framework as a transformative paradigm that redefines dakwah and Muslim community development in Southeast Asia. Integrating Sufistic spirituality, *fiqh al-dakwah*, *maqāsid al-sharī’ah*, and wasathiyah principles, the SSD Framework provides a holistic synthesis linking faith-based ethics with sustainable social transformation. Through its operational triad—*Tazkiyah* (spiritual refinement), *Ta’awun* (social collaboration), and *Taṭāwwur* (institutional innovation)—this framework bridges the divide between individual spirituality and collective empowerment. It addresses the long-standing fragmentation in conventional dakwah models while aligning religious praxis with the ethical imperatives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The main contribution of this research lies in its ability to recontextualize the treasures of classical Islamic scholarship within a framework for social action relevant to contemporary challenges. By grounding social ethics in spirituality and empowerment as a manifestation of praxis, the SSD Framework offers an alternative to secular development approaches and to dakwah limited to the ritual dimension. The SSD Framework also contributes to the renewal of the epistemology of Islamic dakwah: from verbal discourse to transformative and equitable social praxis.

For further research, the SSD Framework opens up development opportunities through: (1) empirical validation in various socio-religious contexts of Southeast Asia; (2) the development of measurable indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation; and (3) comparative studies with other religion-based development models. Thus, this

framework not only enriches academic discourse but also provides a practical roadmap for stakeholders in designing culturally resonant and sustainable community empowerment programs.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, B.U. and M.A.; methodology, B.U.; software, M.A.; validation, B.U., M.A., and M.; formal analysis, B.U.; investigation, B.U.; resources, M.; data curation, M.A.; writing—original draft preparation, B.U.; writing—review and editing, M.A. and M.; visualization, M.A.; supervision, M.; project administration, B.U.; funding acquisition, M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Not applicable. This study is a conceptual article and does not generate or analyze primary empirical data.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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