

Formation of a Professional Converts Development Model as Preachers Based on the Fuzzy Delphi Method

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Abstract

The number of converts in Malaysia continues to increase annually; however, the number of professional converts serving as preachers remains low due to the absence of specific programmes designed to develop professional converts as preachers. Additionally, challenges such as a lack of religious knowledge, weak communication skills, and difficulty adapting to the role of a preacher further hinder their development. This study aims to develop a Professional Converts Development Model as Preachers using a design and development research approach. The main components of this model were validated by an expert panel through the Fuzzy Delphi Method. Seven professional converts were selected as experts to reach a consensus on six key components of the model: (i) preacher/da'wah organisation, (ii) message, (iii) approach (programme), (iv) medium, (v) location, and (vi) process. A seven-point Likert scale questionnaire was employed, and data were analysed using Fuzzy triangular numbering and the Defuzzification process. The findings indicate that all key components of the model meet the threshold value requirement (≤ 0.2), expert agreement percentage ($\geq 75\%$), and Defuzzification score (α -cut ≥ 0.5). This model is not only relevant as a guideline for the development of professional converts as preachers in Malaysia but also has the potential to be applied in a global context. The contribution of this study includes strengthening preacher development and creating a positive societal impact.

Keywords: Defuzzification , Preacher development, Professional convert, Religious.

Introduction

Converts are a group that receives special attention in the context of Islamic community development, particularly as one of the eight asnaf eligible to receive zakat. In Malaysia, the number of converts has been increasing consistently each year. According to the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), a total of 106,747 individuals embraced Islam between 2000 and 2012, with significant growth continuing to the present (Federal Territory Islamic Religious Department [JAWI], 2022). This increase necessitates greater attention to guidance and development efforts to ensure that converts can lead their lives as Muslims more effectively.

As preachers, converts possess unique advantages. Their deep understanding of their original culture, customs, and beliefs provides added value in conveying the message of Islam more effectively to their original communities (Azirawati, 2020). However, the number of professional preachers among converts in Malaysia remains low. This shortfall is due to the absence of a systematic and structured development programme to guide converts into becoming professional preachers (Fatimah Syarha et al., 2019). Additionally, various challenges, such as a lack of religious knowledge, insufficient communication skills, and difficulty adapting to their new responsibilities, further hinder the potential development of converts as preachers (Ab Aziz, 2020).

The selection of professional converts with relevant experience is crucial to ensuring the development of a holistic and effective model. Furthermore, the professional converts selected for this study are individuals who not only have work experience in professional fields but have also demonstrated a strong commitment to dawah activities (Muhammad Yusuf et al., 2025). This group has significant potential to contribute to the formation of influential preachers with the ability to convey the message of Islam effectively and establish positive relationships with various social groups (Hartono et al., 2023).

The success of developing professional converts largely depends on their ability to act as agents of social change, helping to correct misconceptions about Islam and promoting harmonious social integration. Research indicates that institutional support and dedicated development programmes are necessary to empower converts as competent preachers (Lundeto, 2023). Therefore, selecting converts with clear professional criteria is critical to ensuring that this development model has an effective impact.

A systematic approach, such as the Fuzzy Delphi Method, is employed to identify and assess the key elements for developing this model. By integrating elements of professionalism and dawah skills, this model has the potential to strengthen human resource development in the field of dawah and inclusively meet contemporary dawah needs.

Professional Converts

A convert refers to an individual who has recently embraced Islam and is often referred to as a new brother or sister in faith. According to the Fourth Edition of the Dewan Dictionary, a convert is defined as someone whose heart has been inclined towards Islam. The term originates from the Arabic word *alifa*, which means to like or be inclined towards something, and *allafa baynahum*, which signifies fostering relationships among individuals (Ridwan Kamil Nim, 2021). From a Quranic perspective, converts are among those eligible to receive zakat,

as mentioned in Surah At-Tawbah, verse 60, describing them as individuals whose hearts are inclined toward Islam (Mu'jam al-Faz al-Quran al-Karim). Additionally, contemporary scholars assert that the term convert not only refers to new Muslims but also to those with a positive inclination toward Islam who require support to strengthen their faith (Mohammad Noorazlan & Nor Aini, 2023).

Professionalism in an Islamic context emphasises the integration of ethical and moral values in all aspects of work. Mohamad Ghozali (2018) states that professionalism in Islam involves performing tasks in accordance with shariah law, based on principles of justice and honesty. In professional practice, elements such as competence, integrity, and social responsibility are prioritised (Julia Madzalan et al., 2021).

In the context of convert development, professionalism implies that converts not only possess in-depth knowledge of Islam but are also equipped with communication skills, leadership abilities, and the capacity to interact effectively with diverse communities. A study by Lundeto (2023) highlights that a strategic approach to developing professional converts can help them become effective agents of social change.

The study by Majid, Hamdani, and Ramly (2024) demonstrates that professionally trained converts with a holistic approach are crucial in correcting misconceptions about Islam and fostering greater social integration. This study also underscores the importance of collaboration between dawah institutions and local communities to ensure the effectiveness of convert development programmes.

Institutional support and specialised development programmes are critical elements in empowering professional converts as preachers. Developing converts as professional preachers requires a systematic and comprehensive approach. According to Hartono et al. (2023), professional converts trained in communication and leadership skills can play a significant role in conveying the message of Islam to diverse communities.

The development of professional converts not only meets contemporary dawah needs but also has a long-term impact in shaping a more inclusive and progressive Islamic society. By combining deep knowledge of Islam with proficiency in dawah, professional converts can effectively spread the message of Islam and emerge as influential preachers.

Higher education in Malaysia is currently facing various issues and challenges that require immediate and effective solutions. With rapid changes in technology, globalization, and industry needs, higher education institutions (HEIs) in Malaysia need to adapt and change their approach to ensure their graduates are globally relevant and competitive.

HEIs in Malaysia need to take a holistic approach that includes curriculum reform, improvement of teaching staff skills, provision of better financial support, and optimal use of

Methodology

The model proposed in this study was developed using a design and development research approach. The key components of the model were designed and developed using the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) (Zulkefli & Nor Izzatul Husna, 2022). Purposive sampling was applied in selecting expert panel members relevant to the study context. According to Rowe and Wright

(2011), the optimal number of experts in a Fuzzy Delphi study ranges from five to twenty, depending on their field of expertise. In this study, seven experts were involved, consisting of professional converts experienced in dawah activities.

Findings

The findings of this study are presented in two sub-phases: the design phase and the model development phase. In the design phase, a literature review was conducted, followed by the design process for each item within the model's key components, based on expert consensus using the Fuzzy Delphi Method. The second sub-phase focuses on developing the main component items, also referred to as the model development phase. The same methodology was applied using Fuzzy Delphi (FDM), with priority rankings assessed by an expert panel selected based on their expertise and extensive experience in the research context.

Table 1 shows the key components of the professional convert model as a preacher, which have been agreed upon by experts.

Table 1

Key Components of the Professional Convert Model as a Preacher Based on Fuzzy

No.	Key Component	Triangular Fuzzy Numbers Requirement		Defuzzification Process Requirement				Expert Consensus
		Threshold Value, d	Expert Group Consensus Percentage, %	m1	m2	m3	Fuzzy Score (A)	
1	Preacher	0.115	100.0	0.786	0.929	0.986	0.900	ACCEPTED
2	Message	0.173	85.7	0.786	0.914	0.957	0.886	ACCEPTED
3	Approach (Programme)	0.171	85.7	0.757	0.900	0.957	0.871	ACCEPTED
4	Medium	0.115	100	0.786	0.929	0.986	0.900	ACCEPTED
5	Place	0.171	85.7	0.757	0.900	0.957	0.871	ACCEPTED
6	Process	0.075	100	0.814	0.957	1.000	0.924	ACCEPTED
Recommendations from the expert panel:								
None								

Delphi (FDM) Analysis and Expert Panel Recommendations

Requirements:

Triangular Fuzzy Numbers

Threshold Value (d) ≤ 0.2

Expert Agreement Percentage $\geq 75\%$

Defuzzification Process

Fuzzy Score (A) $\geq \alpha$ -cut value = 0.5

Preachers/Da'wah Organisations

This component records a threshold value of 0.115, meeting the threshold requirement of ≤ 0.2 , with expert agreement reaching a maximum level of 100%. The fuzzy score (A) for this component is 0.900, exceeding the α -cut value of 0.5. These results indicate that the role of preachers is a crucial item in the development of the professional convert model. This high value signifies full consensus among experts regarding the relevance of this component.

Message

The message component records a threshold value of 0.173 and an expert agreement percentage of 85.7%. While both values meet the requirements, the fuzzy score (A) is 0.886, which also exceeds the α -cut value of 0.5. This indicates that the message conveyed in da'wah requires clarity and relevance to ensure effectiveness. Although expert agreement did not reach the maximum level, this analysis confirms the importance of the message component as a key element in the model.

Approach (Program)

The approach or program component records a threshold value of 0.171 and an expert agreement percentage of 85.7%, with a fuzzy score (A) of 0.871. All values meet the established criteria. This component indicates that a systematic approach or program is needed to ensure the effectiveness of da'wah among converts. This analysis highlights the necessity of a structured approach that aligns with the cultural and social context of the community.

Medium

The medium component records a threshold value of 0.115, with expert agreement reaching 100%. The fuzzy score (A) is 0.900, exceeding the α -cut value of 0.5. These results indicate that the use of mediums such as digital technology or interactive communication is a critical element in delivering da'wah to converts. The maximum agreement percentage signifies full consensus among experts regarding the importance of this component.

Place

The place component records a threshold value of 0.171, with an expert agreement percentage of 85.7%. The fuzzy score (A) for this component is 0.871, meeting the α -cut value of 0.5. These results indicate that selecting a strategic location is crucial to ensuring the effectiveness of da'wah delivery. Although it does not achieve maximum consensus, these findings still confirm the importance of the place component as a key element in the model.

Process

The process component records the lowest threshold value of 0.075 and an expert agreement percentage of 100%. The fuzzy score (A) is 0.924, the highest value in this analysis. These results indicate that a systematic and well-planned process plays a vital role in ensuring the effectiveness of developing professional converts as preachers. The maximum agreement percentage demonstrates full consensus among experts regarding the importance of this element.

Findings from Table 1 indicate that all main components in the professional convert model as preachers meet the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) analysis criteria, including the threshold value (≤ 0.2), expert agreement percentage ($\geq 75\%$), and fuzzy score ($\geq \alpha$ -cut value = 0.5). Components such as preachers/da'wah organisations, medium, and process recorded maximum agreement (100%), marking these elements as core foundations in the model's development. Although the message, approach, and place components did not reach maximum agreement, the obtained threshold values and fuzzy scores still confirm their relevance in supporting the model's effectiveness.

These findings align with the study by Hartono et al. (2023), which emphasises the importance of a systematic approach in developing professional preachers to address social and cultural challenges. This study also supports Lundeto's (2023) perspective, which states that technological mediums such as social media are critical in ensuring effective da'wah message delivery to a diverse audience. Additionally, research by Majid, Hamdani, and Ramly (2024) highlights that a well-planned development process, including training modules and performance evaluations, is a crucial element in ensuring the success of convert development programs.

A previous study by Zulkefli and Nor Izzatul Husna (2022) also supports these findings, emphasizing that a low threshold value and high expert agreement are important indicators in ensuring the model elements are relevant to practical needs. These findings align with Delbecq et al.'s (1975) view that expert consensus is the foundation of an effective model development.

Overall, this analysis demonstrates that the professional convert model as preachers is not only relevant in addressing contemporary da'wah needs but also has a long-term impact in shaping a more inclusive and progressive Islamic society. With the integration of key elements validated through FDM, this model has the potential to serve as a practical guide for convert development in Malaysia and a global context.

Next Steps, once the discussion and agreement process on the elements of each component have been conducted, the determination of the primary ranking of each element within the main components will be carried out to develop the professional convert model as preachers.

Analysis of the Professional Convert Model Development as Preachers

The model development analysis is the second part of the design and development phase of the professional convert model as preachers, also using the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) as a tool for model development. The expert group reached a consensus in confirming the priority ranking of the main component items in the model. The ranking aims to determine the order and priority of elements contained within the preacher/da'wah organization, message, approach (program), medium, place, and process components in implementing the development of professional converts as preachers. The prioritization of main component items employs relational and contextual phrasing. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the key component items.

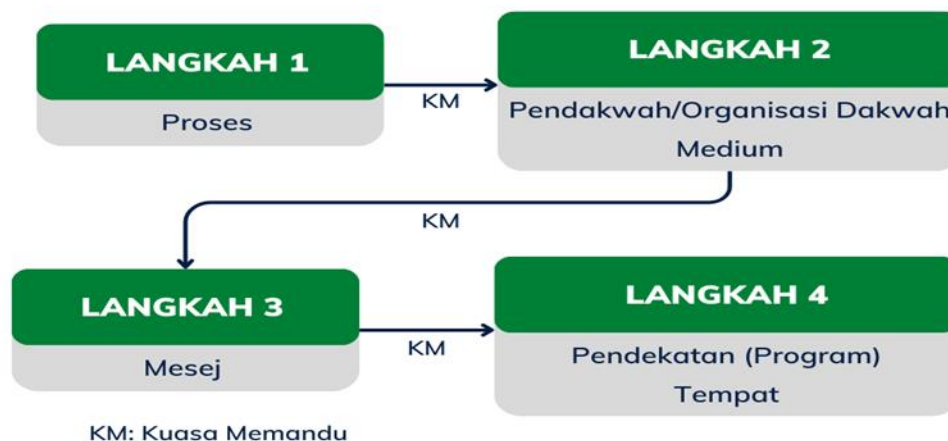


Figure 1: Contextual Relationship Phases Based on Key Components

Figure 1 illustrates the process items in the key components of the model, prioritising the process item before the preacher and medium items, followed by the preacher and medium items before the message item, while the message item takes precedence over the approach and location items. The contextual relationship phrases regarding the key components produce a model that can be utilized in the development of professional converts as preachers.

Based on Figure 1, each component of the professional convert model as a preacher clearly shows the sequence and priority agreed upon by the panel of experts. This serves as a guideline and reference in shaping professional converts as preachers. The sequence formation in this model is based on the consensus of the panel of experts in determining the primary positioning using the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM). This process has resulted in a highly useful and beneficial guideline within the context of the study conducted by the author.

This model is also iterative, beginning with the process as the first step, followed by the preacher/dakwah organization and medium simultaneously as the second step, then the message as the third step, and finally, the approach (programme) and location simultaneously as the fourth step. Looking back, the professional convert model as a preacher was developed to shape converts into professional preachers. From the development of this model, the author has also conducted an analysis of the driving power and dependence power of each element in the key components.

Discussions

Preachers or dakwah organizations play a crucial role in providing guidance and support to converts in their journey to becoming professional preachers. Dakwah organisations help ensure that converts gain relevant practical experience in carrying out their preaching duties (Hartono, Masduki, & Romadi, 2023).

Delivering a clear, accurate, and socially relevant message is a critical element of dakwah. According to Lundeto (2023), the message conveyed must be adapted to the local cultural and social context. It should emphasise universal Islamic values that are easily accepted by

various segments of society. The delivery of the message should be designed to address current ideological challenges and highlight the inclusive values of Islam (Fatimah Syarha et al., 2019).

The approach (programme) in dakwah requires strategic planning to ensure effectiveness and acceptance within multicultural societies. Programmes such as communication training, interactive seminars, and skills workshops provide converts with opportunities to refine their abilities as preachers (Majid, Hamdani, & Ramly, 2024). A study by Lundeto (2023) indicates that institutional support and collaboration between preachers and educational institutions are crucial for the professional development of converts.

The appropriate use of mediums in dakwah is key to its effectiveness. The adoption of modern technology, such as social media and communication applications, has proven to be able to reach a wider and more diverse audience (Ab Aziz et al., 2020). Research by Hartono et al. (2023) highlights that the use of information technology in dakwah is essential for adapting to social changes. Relevant mediums help in effectively delivering messages, particularly to younger generations.

The strategic selection of locations for activities related to the development of professional converts is also an important aspect to consider. Places such as mosques, community centres, and public spaces are often the primary locations for engaging directly with communities in dakwah programmes. A study by Azirawati (2020) found that community-friendly locations influence the level of acceptance of dakwah messages.

The development process of professional converts involves systematic and well-planned steps, including the implementation of training modules, performance assessments, and continuous mentoring. Research by Hartono et al. (2023) emphasises that a systematic process enables converts to build self-confidence and the ability to become effective preachers. Continuous evaluation and institutional support also play a crucial role in ensuring the effectiveness of convert development (Lundeto, 2023).

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that all the key components identified are relevant and accepted by experts in forming the professional convert model as a preacher. The high level of consensus among experts suggests that the approach used is appropriate and can serve as a guideline in the development of professional converts. This study contributes significantly to the field of dakwah and human resource development, particularly in the context of professional convert formation.

This study makes significant theoretical contributions by integrating the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) into the development of a structured model for professional converts as preachers, bridging gaps in existing literature on *dakwah* and human resource development. Theoretically, it advances the understanding of how systematic approaches combining expert consensus, Islamic principles, and modern communication strategies can enhance the effectiveness of converts' development programmes. Contextually, the research addresses a pressing need in Malaysia, where the growing number of converts lacks targeted guidance to become professional preachers. By validating six key components: (i) preacher/da'wah

organisation, (ii) message, (iii) approach (programme), (iv) medium, (v) location, and (vi) process, the model offers a culturally adaptive framework that aligns with Malaysia's multicultural society and global *dakwah* challenges. Its emphasis on institutional collaboration and iterative processes also provides actionable insights for policymakers and Islamic organisations, fostering inclusive societal integration and long-term religious outreach.

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