

Autoethnographic Reflections on Da'wah Representation in *Rindu Suara Adzan* 2024

Budi Zaelani

Institut Seni Budaya Indonesia (ISBI) Bandung
212 Buah Batu Street, Bandung, Indonesia
budizaelani70@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The *Rindu Suara Adzan* 2024 religious-comedy soap opera depicts quotidian socioeconomic realities infused with Islamic principles, including humor and elements of contemporary culture. This article offers an autoethnographic reflection on the author's experience portraying "Mas Sugeng," utilizing Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework to analyze the visual and symbolic portrayal of da'wah. This study used a qualitative narrative approach to analyze four situations that illustrate the home, economic, and emotional aspects of masculinity within urban Indonesian society. The findings indicate that da'wah in religious meditation and television dramas functions not by verbal preaching but through nuanced emotional connection, humor, and approachable moral exemplars. The analysis illustrates how Sugeng's gestures, objects, and silences represent inclusive Islamic messages, so converting entertainment into a participatory modality of popular da'wah. This study enhances comprehension of media Islamization, emotional piety, and cultural communication in postmodern Indonesia, positioning autoethnography as both a method and a performance within visual culture research.

Keywords: autoethnography, Peircean semiotics, religious-comedy soap opera, masculinity, da'wah, visual culture.

INTRODUCTION

Television remains one of the most influential mass media in Indonesia, shaping collective consciousness through visual narratives that combine entertainment and moral instruction. For decades, television soap operas (*sinetron*) have occupied a central role in Indonesian popular culture, functioning as both a mirror of social reality and a moral compass that reflects the shifting values of society. Among the various genres, *religious-comedy sinetron* represent a distinctive phenomenon in contemporary

Indonesian media, as they blend humor, Islamic ethics, and everyday life into a unique form of visual preaching (*dakwah visual*).

In the post-reformasi era, religious television programs have evolved from didactic sermons into entertaining and emotionally engaging narratives (Heryanto, 2015; Hoesterey, 2016). Unlike earlier religious dramas that centered on moral dichotomies and textual piety, recent productions have embraced humor, irony, and local realism. *Rindu Suara Adzan*, which

has aired consistently from 2016 to 2024, exemplifies this transformation. The series translates Islamic teachings into domestic settings, where faith intersects with humor, social tension, and the moral complexity of urban life. Such evolution reflects the broader “Islamic turn” in Indonesian popular media (Fealy & White, 2008), where religious expressions merge with consumer aesthetics, shaping a form of “aesthetic Islam” that is simultaneously sacred and entertaining.

In recent years, Indonesian religious television has experienced a transformation from moralistic sermon-based narratives into more affective, visually engaging forms of storytelling. Scholars such as Adityo (2022), Karim (2022), and Wahyudi (2024) have observed that the expression of *da’wah* in contemporary media increasingly relies on sincerity, empathy, and visual intimacy. Religious values are performed not only through speech but also through gesture, sound, and emotional tone. This transformation reflects a broader tendency toward what Bakar and Sari (2022) call “mediated spirituality,” where faith is negotiated between the spiritual and the spectacular. In this context, *Rindu Suara Adzan* 2024 serves as a cultural mirror, illustrating how contemporary Indonesian audiences interact with Islam through emotional resonance rather than instructional authority.

The figure of Mas Sugeng, played by the author, stands at the intersection of these discourses. He is not a cleric or saintly character but an ordinary man, a repairman, husband, and community member navigating modern urban challenges. His masculinity is fragile yet humane, his humor

conceals emotional depth, and his silence often signifies moral struggle. This paradoxical character transforms the religious-comedy format into a space of spiritual reflection rather than mere laughter. The author’s lived experience of portraying Mas Sugeng becomes a critical entry point to explore how *dakwah* operates not only through language but also through performance, gesture, and emotional resonance.

This paper employs an autoethnographic approach, positioning the author’s own experiences as an analytical lens to interrogate broader cultural meanings. In line with Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011), autoethnography situates personal narrative within social and cultural frameworks, allowing researchers to use self-reflection as data for understanding collective identity. In this context, acting is not merely performance but also *praxis*, a mode of embodying and communicating cultural values. The author’s role as both performer and researcher allows for what Spry (2019) calls a “performative autoethnography,” where bodily experience becomes a form of scholarly articulation.

Alongside autoethnography, this study applies Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotic theory to decode visual and symbolic elements in the sinetron. Peirce’s triadic model of icon, index, and symbol offers a systematic way to interpret how visual signs (e.g., prayer rugs, motorbikes, clothing, and gestures) construct layers of religious meaning. Within this framework, visual culture becomes an arena of *signification* where the sacred is translated into the mundane (Danesi, 2004; Mirzoeff, 1999). By combining semiotics and autoethnography,

this research examines how personal performance and visual representation co-create an inclusive model of *dakwah* that resonates with contemporary audiences.

The concept of da'wah itself is undergoing a significant transformation in Indonesia's media landscape. Traditional da'wah, often associated with sermons or textual preaching, is being reimagined through visual storytelling, music, and humor (Barendregt, 2018; Rahim, 2021). The *Rindu Suara Adzan* series demonstrates how Islamic values can be communicated through empathy and everyday humor rather than authoritative instruction. This shift aligns with what Hoesterey (2016) describes as "emotional piety," a form of religiosity grounded in affective experience rather than doctrinal discourse. Within this framework, laughter and emotion become channels for spiritual engagement, making Islamic messages more accessible to diverse audiences.

Furthermore, the *religious-comedy* format reveals a gendered dimension of da'wah. Masculinity in Indonesian popular culture has long been portrayed through strength, authority, and control (Nilan, 2009). Yet characters like Mas Sugeng present a new type of masculinity: humble, conflicted, and introspective. His spiritual journey unfolds not through domination but through vulnerability, revealing how everyday men negotiate faith, love, and responsibility in domestic and public spheres. In doing so, the character destabilizes conventional images of male piety, offering instead a model of "popular masculinity" grounded in emotional sincerity.

Despite its cultural significance, the phenomenon of religious-comedy sinetron has received limited scholarly attention. Previous studies have focused on religious films (*Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih*) or serious moral dramas (Wahyuningsih, 2015; Kartikawati, 2024), leaving a gap in the understanding of comedy as a medium of Islamic discourse. This study fills that gap by analyzing how humor, reflexivity, and symbolism operate as subtle tools of da'wah in a televisual context. It also offers a methodological contribution by positioning performance-based autoethnography as a valid form of cultural research in media studies.

In summary, this paper argues that *Rindu Suara Adzan* 2024 represents a paradigmatic shift in Islamic media representation. Through the intertwining of humor, performance, and visual semiotics, the series embodies a "living da'wah," one that is grounded in emotion, relationality, and popular participation. The author's embodied reflections as Mas Sugeng reveal how artistic practice can become a site of religious meaning-making. By situating personal experience within theoretical and cultural frameworks, this study seeks to demonstrate that da'wah in the age of television is not only spoken but *performed*, not only taught but *felt*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Autoethnography in Cultural and Performance Studies

Autoethnography has evolved from a marginal qualitative practice into a respected mode of inquiry that bridges art, identity, and cultural critique. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner

(2011) define autoethnography as an approach that combines personal experience with broader social understanding, turning the self into a site of research. This method challenges the traditional objectivity of social science by positioning the researcher as both subject and observer. In performance and media studies, it offers a unique epistemological lens—allowing creative practitioners to transform embodied experiences into academic discourse.

Spry (2019) argues that autoethnography is not merely a form of storytelling but a performative act: writing becomes a way of re-performing lived experience. This perspective is vital for artist-researchers whose creative process is intertwined with emotional, spiritual, and cultural dimensions. For actors, autoethnography facilitates the expression of internal processes, intentions, improvisations, and emotional responses that frequently remain obscured in conventional research. Through this lens, performing "Mas Sugeng" is not only artistic work but also a form of lived inquiry into Islamic representation, gender roles, and humor.

Recent scholarship has reinforced the legitimacy of performative autoethnography as an artistic methodology. Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis (2021) emphasize the role of affect, embodiment, and reflexivity as epistemic foundations. Similarly, Wardatun (2019) highlights how autoethnography can illuminate the lived experience of Islamic subjects in family and gender relations. In the Indonesian context, such reflexive methodologies are particularly relevant because artists often participate in the social realities they represent. By documenting

one's creative journey as research, the boundary between art-making and knowledge-making becomes fluid.

In this study, autoethnography is used to explore the researcher's dual position as actor and scholar, where performance becomes both data and interpretation. The role of "Mas Sugeng" thus serves as a living text, a microcosm through which the larger discourse of *dakwah*, masculinity, and humor in Islamic media can be analyzed.

2. Peircean Semiotics and Visual Meaning in Television

Semiotics provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how media texts produce meaning. Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model of icon, index, and symbol offers a dynamic system for decoding signs not as fixed entities but as interpretative relationships (Peirce, 1955). Icons resemble their objects, indexes point to causal or existential connections, and symbols rely on cultural conventions. This model has been widely applied in visual studies (Danesi, 2004; Mirzoeff, 1999) to analyze how images function as communicative systems.

In the context of television, visual semiotics helps uncover layers of ideological and cultural significance embedded in mise-en-scène, camera work, and costume. For instance, the motorcycle used by Mas Sugeng in *Rindu Suara Adzan* functions as an icon of the working-class struggle, an index of nostalgia, and a symbol of dignity and perseverance. Such semiotic readings reveal that religious meaning in popular media often resides not in explicit sermons but in symbolic codes embedded within everyday visuals.

Recent studies by Burhan and Anggapuspa (2021) and Ramadhan and Jupriani (2023) demonstrate how Peircean analysis can decode visual religious messages in film and television. Their works underscore that Islamic values can be represented not only through verbal narration but also through visual signifiers like lighting, gesture, costume, and even silence. This understanding aligns with Mirzoeff's (2015) notion of *visuality* as the social process by which meaning is constructed through seeing. In religious-comedy sinetron, humor and spirituality are visually negotiated through familiar symbols: the sarong, the coffee shop, the mosque's courtyard, and the modest house all represent intersections of faith, labor, and daily life.

Thus, Peirce's framework provides the analytical scaffolding for this study: to interpret how Sugeng's bodily gestures, domestic objects, and settings become semiotic vehicles of *dakwah* and identity.

3. Da'wah and Popular Media

The study of *dakwah* in contemporary media explores how Islamic messages are mediated, commodified, and localized. As Hoesterey (2016) observes, Indonesia has witnessed the emergence of "aesthetic Islam," where religious expression permeates fashion, television, and social media. This reflects a shift from textual religiosity to mediated spirituality, a transformation sometimes called *media Islamization*. Heryanto (2015) interprets this as the pleasure-driven politics of piety, in which religion becomes part of popular culture's emotional economy.

Recent literature on Islamic media emphasizes the emotional and embodied aspects of piety in performance. Farida (2021) and Rahmawati (2022) argue that humor within religious narratives often humanizes faith, allowing moral values to emerge organically through laughter and vulnerability. This aligns with Setiadi and Nur's (2024) findings that post-pandemic Islamic broadcasting increasingly integrates humor as a strategy of empathy and spiritual resilience. At a global level, Mahmood and Liew (2023) and Fadilah (2024) identify this shift as part of a broader aesthetic turn in Islamic representation—one that privileges sincerity, feeling, and participation over doctrinal rigidity. These studies collectively frame the Indonesian religious comedy as both a site of spiritual pedagogy and a performance of affective devotion.

In this transformation, *dakwah* is no longer confined to the mosque or pulpit. It takes new forms: motivational talk shows, Islamic pop music, religious influencers, and comedy. Wahyuningsih (2015) and Kartikawati (2024) note that religious films and sinetron such as *Para Pencari Tuhan* and *Rindu Suara Adzan* translate Islamic ethics into everyday stories. Rather than moralizing, they invite empathy and laughter. Meyer (2000) aptly describes humor as a "rhetoric of connection" that disarms resistance, allowing moral messages to flow naturally. Humor thus becomes an inclusive medium for *dakwah*, resonating with audiences who may feel alienated by formal preaching.

Moreover, comedy introduces ambivalence, a productive tension between critique and comfort. It allows for playful

engagement with moral issues while maintaining respect for religious sentiments. This dynamic reflects what Barendregt (2018) calls “Islamic modernity,” in which entertainment serves both spiritual and commercial purposes. The *Rindu Suara Adzan* sinetron embodies this balance: it uses humor not to trivialize faith but to humanize it, making Islam emotionally approachable.

4. Masculinity and Emotional Piety in Media

Masculinity in Indonesian popular media often mirrors broader cultural negotiations between patriarchy, modernity, and spirituality. Nilan (2009) identifies the tension between traditional male authority and the emerging ideals of emotional expression and equality. Within religious narratives, male characters typically oscillate between two poles: the devout *ustadz* and the morally flawed yet redeemable man. Characters like Mas Sugeng occupy an intermediary position, neither heroic nor villainous, but profoundly human.

Sugeng’s domestic conflicts, moments of silence, and reluctant piety exemplify what Hoesterey (2016) terms *emotional piety*: a spiritual sensibility rooted in empathy and feeling rather than dogma. His struggles with pride, debt, and forgiveness represent the moral economy of lower-middle-class masculinity caught between economic hardship and ethical aspiration. Similar portrayals in Indonesian dramas (*Si Doel Anak Sekolahan*) have shown how masculinity is reconfigured through family responsibilities and moral introspection (Suryadi, 2008). The comedic framing allows such tensions to be explored safely,

transforming laughter into a medium of moral reflection.

This intersection of humor and masculinity provides fertile ground for interpreting *dakwah* as affective communication. Rather than preaching obedience, it models self-awareness and compassion. Sugeng’s character teaches that faith can coexist with imperfection and that being pious does not require abandoning humor or humanity.

5. Islamic Aesthetics and Visual Culture

The aesthetics of Islam in contemporary Indonesian media have been shaped by the convergence of religious devotion, market logic, and visual modernity. Barendregt (2018) and Fealy & White (2008) argue that Indonesian screen culture embodies a negotiation between piety and pleasure. The *Rindu Suara Adzan* series exemplifies this: its visual palette, use of lighting, and warm domestic imagery construct a cinematic language of everyday spirituality.

Nicholas Mirzoeff (1999) conceptualizes visual culture as the “arena of meaning-making,” where ideology and emotion intersect. Within this arena, television operates as both a pedagogical and affective space. Religious-comedy sinetrons transform mundane visuals into spiritual metaphors: the call to prayer echoing in a neighborhood, a husband cleaning his motorbike before dawn, or a simple family meal. These images carry symbolic weight beyond their literal depiction, embodying Islam as lived experience rather than abstract theology.

In this regard, the aesthetics of *Rindu Suara Adzan* enact what Meyer (2019) calls

sensational forms: visual and auditory practices that shape how believers sense and experience the divine. The show's humor, music, and domestic intimacy become vehicles of *da'wah* that appeal to emotion rather than intellect. This "aesthetic piety" resonates deeply with Indonesian audiences who value sincerity (*ketulusan*) as a marker of faith.

6. Synthesis

Drawing together these perspectives, this study situates the author's performance within three intersecting frameworks: (1) autoethnography as reflective methodology; (2) Peircean semiotics as an analytical lens for visual meaning; and (3) popular *dakwah* as cultural communication. The synthesis of these dimensions enables a holistic reading of *Rindu Suara Adzan* not only as entertainment but also as an evolving site of Islamic pedagogy, humor, and identity formation. By employing self-reflection as data, this research expands the notion of *dakwah* from verbal preaching to embodied practice, making art a living form of worship and cultural dialogue.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study adopts a reflective qualitative design grounded in narrative autoethnography, complemented by Peircean visual semiotic analysis. Autoethnography, as Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) define, connects personal experience (*auto*), cultural analysis (*ethno*), and systematic research (*graphy*). The approach allows the researcher, who is also the actor, to transform subjective experiences into academic knowledge. In artistic research,

this design bridges creative practice and scholarly reflection, where the body, emotion, and performance become legitimate sources of data (Spry, 2019; Adams et al., 2021).

This method is particularly suitable for studying the *Rindu Suara Adzan 2024* sinetron because the researcher occupies a dual position as both performer and analyst. As the actor playing *Mas Sugeng*, the author engages with the narrative emotionally and spiritually. This position enables an intimate understanding of how gestures, dialogues, and visual compositions embody *dakwah* messages. The qualitative orientation ensures that meanings are explored holistically rather than measured quantitatively, emphasizing depth over generalization.

The integration of Peirce's semiotics strengthens the analytical rigor of the study. By interpreting signs through the triadic relation of icon–index–symbol, the researcher examines how visual and performative elements in the sinetron operate as signifiers of faith, morality, and social identity. Combining autoethnography and semiotics enables a multidimensional interpretation: lived experience is decoded alongside cultural meaning.

2. Research Context

The study focuses on the Indonesian religious-comedy soap opera *Rindu Suara Adzan 2024*, produced for national television. The show, which has aired for multiple seasons, depicts urban working-class families negotiating faith and everyday challenges. The narrative situates religion within humor, domestic conflict, and love, creating a dynamic interplay between piety and laughter.

The selected episodes (four out of sixteen) represent key moments in Mas Sugeng's spiritual transformation from a prideful, stubborn husband to a more reflective and humble individual. These episodes were chosen because they contain prominent symbols and scenes of moral and emotional intensity, such as Sugeng's silent repentance, his humorous arguments with his wife, and his contemplative gaze toward the mosque. Each moment becomes an artifact of spiritual and artistic expression.

3. Data Sources

Data for this study were obtained through four complementary sources:

1. Personal Reflective Journals. The author's notes during and after filming, documenting emotional responses, improvisations, and internal reflections about each scene.
2. Participatory Observation. Continuous observation of production processes and post-broadcast audience reception, focusing on how humor and *dakwah* elements were negotiated in performance.
3. Informal Interviews. Conversations with directors, fellow actors, and scriptwriters regarding character development and the intended moral subtext.
4. Visual and Symbolic Analysis. Examination of selected scenes, props, costumes, gestures, and settings that visually encode Islamic messages.

Together, these sources allow triangulation between subjective reflection, production context, and textual evidence.

4. Data Collection Techniques

The data collection process unfolded in three stages:

1. Immersive Reflection. During the filming process, the author maintained daily field notes focusing on emotional responses, physical embodiment, and moral contemplation.
2. Scene Selection and Documentation. Four representative episodes were identified for detailed analysis; each scene was transcribed and visually mapped to identify significant symbols (e.g., motorcycle, sarong, mosque, silence).
3. Collaborative Validation. Discussions with the production team were conducted to compare the actor's interpretation with the creative intent, ensuring the credibility of the interpretation.

The use of *self-as-data* is justified because, in performative research, the subject's experience constitutes both the object and method of study. The reflexive process transforms subjective insight into collective meaning.

5. Data Analysis Procedures

Data were analyzed through a **two-layered interpretative process**:

1. **Narrative Autoethnography** Personal journals and reflective notes were structured into a coherent narrative that traces the spiritual and emotional evolution of the actor-character relationship. This stage emphasizes *meaning-making*—how the actor's experiences resonate with broader Islamic and social contexts. The adoption of

autoethnography in this research reflects a growing trend in artistic and religious studies that values the researcher's embodied position as a legitimate site of inquiry (Hidayat, 2023; Zainuddin & Kholis, 2021). As Wahyudi (2024) notes, performative autoethnography allows art practitioners to transform creative acts into spiritual reflection. Through this lens, my experience as an actor becomes not merely data but also a devotional act, where performing sincerity becomes a way of knowing the divine through the body.

2. Peircean Semiotic Analysis Each scene was examined using Peirce's triadic sign model:

- a. Icon: resemblance (e.g., the motorcycle as a reflection of working-class identity)
- b. Index: causal or existential connection (e.g., Sugeng's silence as an index of internal conflict)
- c. Symbol: culturally constructed meaning (e.g., the sarong as humility and spiritual discipline).
- d. This interpretive coding was then synthesized to reveal thematic clusters such as *humor as da'wah*, *spiritual masculinity*, and *visual piety*.

6. Validity and Reflexivity

To ensure research credibility, this study employed triangulation, peer validation, and reflexive transparency.

- a. Triangulation was achieved by cross-referencing reflective journals, scene analysis, and discussions with the production team.
- b. Peer validation involved feedback from fellow researchers in art and

media studies to verify interpretive consistency.

- c. Reflexivity was maintained by explicitly acknowledging the researcher's positionality as both participant and observer, thus transforming subjectivity into an analytic strength (Wardatun, 2019).

As an autoethnographic work, validity is grounded not in objectivity but in authenticity, resonance, and cultural insight (Ellis & Bochner, 2021). The goal is not to generalize findings but to deepen understanding of how creative experience communicates religious and emotional truth.

7. Ethical Considerations

All reflections are drawn from the researcher's own experience without compromising other participants' privacy. Names of production members (other than public figures) are anonymized. The study aligns with ethical standards of qualitative research, ensuring that personal testimony serves as scholarly evidence while maintaining respect for collaborators and audiences.

8. Methodological Contribution

This methodological synthesis offers a model for art-based religious media research. By combining embodied reflection and visual semiotics, the study positions performance as both data and method. The approach not only illuminates the cultural function of religious-comedy sinetron but also demonstrates how acting can serve as a form of *living da'wah*, a participatory expression of faith through art.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Performing "Mas Sugeng": Between Laughter and Reflection

The character of *Mas Sugeng* in *Rindu Suara Adzan* 2024 represents the ordinary Indonesian man: humorous, proud, sometimes careless, yet profoundly humane. His character's appeal lies in his contradictions: he jokes to conceal anxiety, boasts to protect his fragile dignity, and hides emotion behind laughter. Through this paradox, Sugeng becomes a cultural archetype of the *urban working-class Muslim male*, reflecting the everyday negotiations between faith, economy, and masculinity.

As an actor, embodying Sugeng involved both artistic creation and spiritual introspection. During filming, humor often emerged spontaneously; yet, beneath the laughter, I felt the weight of moral contemplation. When Sugeng mocked himself or quarreled with his wife, the performance turned into a mirror of personal reflection. I learned that this role was a form of *da'wah*, not just entertainment. Rather, it was what Hoesterey (2016) calls *emotional piety*: communicating moral values through empathy and emotional resonance.

This performative process revealed a critical insight: *da'wah* does not always require authority; it can also arise from vulnerability. Sugeng's flaws prove his pride, stubbornness, and guilt make him easy to relate to. In portraying him, I found that sincerity (*ketulusan*) and humor could embody faith more powerfully than sermonizing could. The character thus challenges the conventional portrayal of pious masculinity, inviting audiences to laugh, feel, and reflect simultaneously.

2. Humor as a Medium of *Da'wah*

Humor occupies a central place in the *Rindu Suara Adzan* narrative. Each episode weaves moral advice into comedic dialogue, transforming laughter into a form of soft persuasion. According to Meyer (2000), humor functions as a "rhetoric of connection," capable of disarming resistance and fostering intimacy. In Islamic contexts, humor can carry ethical nuance while maintaining reverence, turning moral critique into communal reflection.

For instance, in one memorable scene, Sugeng laments to his friends at a coffee stall:

"If your wife starts staying quiet, be careful. That's no longer patience; that's the prelude to war."

The audience laughs, yet the humor contains truth about gendered communication and emotional awareness. As Spry (2019) suggests, humor in performance often reveals hidden cultural tensions. Here, laughter becomes a bridge between critique and empathy. The scene subtly invites men to reflect on their domestic behavior, using comedy as moral pedagogy.

From a semiotic perspective, such humor operates through indexical signs—gestures, pauses, and intonations that point to shared social experiences. Sugeng's exaggerated expressions or his awkward silences act as *indexes* of guilt and humility. These embodied performances convey Islamic virtues like patience, honesty, and forgiveness without didactic speech. Humor thus becomes *visual da'wah*: a teaching delivered through tone, timing, and expression.

Furthermore, the integration of humor aligns with Indonesia's tradition of *religious*

folk comedy (*lenong dakwah, ketoprak humor, and ludruk Islami*), where laughter serves as spiritual relief. In *Rindu Suara Adzan*, humor reclaims this heritage for television, demonstrating that laughter and piety can coexist as forms of worship.

3. Semiotic Reading of Da'wah Symbols

Using Peirce's semiotic model, the show's visual language reveals layers of meaning embedded in mundane objects and gestures. The following table summarizes key sign systems identified in selected episodes:

Visual Object / Gesture	Sign Type (Peirce)	Da'wah Interpretation
Antique motorcycle	Icon + Symbol	Represents struggle, persistence, and the dignity of labor.
Sugeng cleaning the motorcycle before dawn	Index + Symbol	Reflects humility, diligence, and preparation for prayer.
Sugeng's sarong and t-shirt attire	Icon	Signals simplicity and proximity to common people.
Sugeng silent before the mosque	Index + Symbol	Indicates inner turmoil, repentance, and spiritual longing.
Sugeng not retaliating against his wife's anger	Symbol	Embody patience and self-control as Islamic virtues.

Each sign constructs meaning through triadic relationships: visual resemblance (*icon*), contextual connection (*index*), and

cultural convention (*symbol*). For example, when Sugeng gazes silently at the mosque, the scene carries multi-layered significance: the mosque as an icon of faith, his silence as an index of moral reflection, and the entire mise-en-scène as a symbol of human vulnerability before God.

These visual codes embody what Danesi (2004) calls "semiotic condensation," where a simple gesture encapsulates complex meanings. In religious-comedy sinetron, such condensation allows Islamic teachings to be experienced aesthetically rather than doctrinally. The absence of explicit preaching is replaced by a contemplative atmosphere, soft music, lingering shots, and expressions of quiet remorse that evoke emotional piety.

This semiotic richness demonstrates how visual storytelling can perform *dakwah* by showing rather than telling. The audience does not receive religious instruction directly; instead, they perceive faith through atmosphere, tone, and empathy. In this sense, *Rindu Suara Adzan* exemplifies what Mirzoeff (1999) terms *visual culture*: a space where meaning is negotiated through seeing, feeling, and remembering.

4. Masculinity and Spiritual Transformation

One of the most profound narrative arcs in the series is Sugeng's gradual transformation from pride to humility. At first, he resists moral authority, dismissing his wife's advice, mocking religious discipline, and prioritizing ego over devotion. Yet through a series of domestic conflicts and emotional confrontations, he begins to experience subtle awakenings.

A key episode illustrates this shift: after being scolded for wasting money on motorcycle parts, Sugeng sits alone, listening to the evening call to prayer. The camera captures him in medium close-up, his face half-lit by the twilight, his expression pensive. No dialogue follows, only silence and the distant sound of the *adhan*. This silence becomes the loudest expression of repentance.

From an autoethnographic standpoint, this moment mirrored my own spiritual realization. Acting that scene felt like reliving an inner call, an awakening not written in the script but emerging through embodiment. As Schechner (2020) suggests, performance is a transformative act where the boundary between actor and character dissolves. I felt that Sugeng's repentance was also mine; his silence was my prayer.

Through Peirce's lens, the scene's semiotic depth unfolds as follows:

- a. Icon: the mosque and its illumination represent divine presence;
- b. Index: Sugeng's stillness signifies contemplation;
- c. Symbol: the act of listening to *adhan* expresses submission and spiritual readiness.

This transformation portrays masculinity not as dominance but as humility, a recognition of one's fallibility before God. Such portrayal aligns with Nilan's (2009) observation that Indonesian men increasingly negotiate between traditional patriarchal expectations and emotional expressiveness. Sugeng's metamorphosis thus redefines Islamic masculinity as *empathic leadership*, where

strength is measured by patience and sincerity.

Moreover, this transformation corresponds to what Hoesterey (2016) calls "emotional piety," a form of faith cultivated through affective resonance rather than doctrinal learning. In *Rindu Suara Adzan*, piety is not declared but *felt*; it emerges through gestures of care, forgiveness, and humor. This emotional register makes the show profoundly accessible to audiences who experience religion as part of everyday life.

5. Visual Aesthetics and Islamic Atmosphere

Beyond narrative and character, the series constructs its *Islamic sensibility* through visual composition. The cinematography often employs warm, natural lighting, evoking the intimacy of domestic spirituality. The recurring use of the color green and earth tones reinforces calmness and purity. Soft musical scores accompany transitional moments, creating a contemplative rhythm. These aesthetic strategies correspond with Meyer's (2019) notion of sensational forms, artistic modalities that influence religious perception via sensory engagement.

The mosque's visual framing, sometimes seen from a distance, sometimes reflected in mirrors or water, serves as a symbolic axis connecting the profane and the sacred. Even mundane activities, such as cooking or repairing a motorcycle, are bathed in this visual spirituality. Barendregt (2018) notes that such "Islamic aesthetics of everyday life" construct piety as a lifestyle, merging faith with visual pleasure.

From this perspective, *Rindu Suara Adzan* transmutes visual realism into

spiritual allegory. The domestic space transforms into a microcosm of moral education, while the camera serves as a tool for spreading the word. Every prop, like a radio, sarong, or coffee cup, acts as a carrier of meaning, producing what Mirzoeff (2015) describes as "a pedagogy of vision." The audience learns to see Islam not only as belief but as practice embedded in gestures, textures, and humor.

6. Humor, Conflict, and Catharsis: The Social Function of the Series

At a sociocultural level, *Rindu Suara Adzan* reflects the negotiation between *religiosity and modernity* in Indonesia's urban context. By portraying moral conflict within relatable domestic settings, the series mediates between sacred ideals and everyday struggles. Viewers recognize their own frustrations, laughter, and contradictions in Sugeng's experiences.

Comedy here serves a **cathartic function**, releasing tension while reinforcing moral balance. In scenes of marital conflict, laughter diffuses anger, allowing moral lessons to emerge gently. This aligns with Aristotle's classical theory of catharsis but is recontextualized within Islamic ethics: laughter becomes purification, restoring harmony between husband and wife, human and God.

In my reflective journal, I noted:

"Each laugh I performed as Sugeng was also a sigh of relief, a reminder that sincerity could emerge through imperfection."

This insight positions humor as both social critique and emotional healing. It allows the audience to confront moral issues

safely, making the series a space for collective reflection.

6. Popular Da'wah and Media Islamization

The findings suggest that *Rindu Suara Adzan 2024* contributes to the ongoing process of *media Islamization*, the embedding of Islamic values within popular formats. However, unlike propagandistic religious shows, it adopts a participatory and inclusive approach. Da'wah here is not top-down but horizontal; it speaks from within the lived experience of ordinary people.

This aligns with Fealy and White's (2008) idea of "everyday Islam," where piety manifests in emotional and relational practices rather than ritual correctness. The show illustrates how Islamic ethics can adapt to modern sensibilities without losing authenticity. Its success also indicates a shift in audience preference from didactic preaching to affective storytelling.

Furthermore, this participatory da'wah redefines religious communication as aesthetic engagement. Viewers are not passive recipients but co-creators of meaning; they interpret symbols, laugh, and empathize. As a result, television becomes a site of cultural negotiation where faith is continually reinterpreted through art.

8. Summary of Findings

- Autoethnographic Insight:** The actor's lived experience as Mas Sugeng reveals the fusion of artistic embodiment and spiritual reflection. Acting becomes a form of contemporary da'wah.
- Semiotic Analysis:** The visual elements of the motorcycle, mosque, sarong, and gestures function as

interconnected signs conveying humility, perseverance, and moral awareness.

- c. Humor as Communication: Comedy humanizes religion and expands its reach by evoking empathy rather than authority.
- d. Masculinity and Spirituality: The narrative promotes emotional piety and inclusive masculinity, challenging rigid patriarchal norms.
- e. Aesthetic Da'wah: Visual composition and atmosphere perform religious pedagogy through sensation and emotion.
- f. Cultural Impact: The sinetron fosters a vernacular form of da'wah rooted in everyday life that is popular, affective, and transformative.

The findings resonate with Hasan's (2024) concept of "performing repentance," which views the act of performance as a process of moral purification. In *Rindu Suara Adzan* 2024, humor and repentance are intertwined in what Fadilah (2024) describes as "Islamic performativity," a practice where laughter mediates the sacred. This creative negotiation parallels Kurniawan's (2023) notion of hybridity in *da'wah* television, where religious devotion and entertainment aesthetics coexist in tension yet mutual reinforcement. These intersecting modes of representation demonstrate that spiritual meaning in popular media is not diminished by entertainment; instead, it is deepened through emotional proximity and human imperfection.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has explored the interplay between performance, faith, and visual representation in the religious-comedy soap opera *Rindu Suara Adzan* 2024. Through an autoethnographic approach combined with Peircean semiotic analysis, the research demonstrates that da'wah in popular media operates through emotional and aesthetic engagement rather than doctrinal instruction. The author's lived experience as the actor portraying *Mas Sugeng* reveals that religious meaning can emerge through vulnerability, humor, and sincerity, turning entertainment into an arena of ethical reflection.

The findings highlight three central insights. First, autoethnography as artistic research provides a powerful method for examining the spiritual dimensions of performance. By positioning the self as both subject and instrument of inquiry, this approach allows for an embodied understanding of cultural and moral processes. Acting becomes not only a craft but also a medium of religious experience, a *living da'wah* performed through gestures, silences, and laughter.

Second, Peircean semiotic analysis shows that television narratives convey Islamic values through complex sign systems. The motorcycle, mosque, sarong, and domestic spaces serve as icons and symbols of humility, devotion, and perseverance. Through these visual cues, audiences learn to perceive Islam as a lived practice woven into everyday life.

Third, the study reveals that humor functions as affective da'wah, enabling moral messages to be delivered gently and inclusively. Laughter acts as an emotional

bridge that connects diverse audiences to spiritual reflection, transforming the act of watching into a participatory experience of empathy and introspection. This finding affirms Meyer's (2000) view that humor can be a "double-edged sword" capable of critique while fostering social cohesion.

Beyond its analytical contributions, this study offers broader implications for media practice and Islamic communication. It calls for a rethinking of da'wah not as authoritarian preaching but as *cultural dialogue*. Television and digital platforms can become spaces of compassion and reflection when creative workers integrate sincerity (*ikhlas*), humor, and moral subtlety into storytelling. For media producers, religious narratives should avoid binary moralism and instead embrace human complexity, acknowledging that imperfection is also a path to faith.

For scholars, the study contributes to developing a theory of performative da'wah, a framework that situates art, media, and emotion within Islamic epistemology. It expands the discourse of *visual piety* (Hoesterey, 2016; Barendregt, 2018) by emphasizing performance as a sensory and ethical form of devotion. Moreover, it demonstrates that autoethnography can enrich art research in Indonesia by legitimizing embodied experience as academic knowledge.

In conclusion, *Rindu Suara Adzan 2024* embodies a paradigm of *popular Islam* that is inclusive, affective, and culturally grounded. It portrays faith not as distant authority but as everyday sincerity, expressed through humor, struggle, and love. The role of *Mas Sugeng*—imperfect yet genuine—serves as a

reminder that art can be both entertainment and enlightenment. In the laughter of ordinary lives, da'wah continues not from the pulpit, but from the screen, the heart, and the body in performance.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, T. E., Jones, S. H., & Ellis, C. (2021). *Autoethnography: Understanding qualitative research*. Oxford University Press.

Adityo, M. (2022). Visual piety and popular Islam in Indonesian television dramas. *Panggung: Jurnal Seni & Budaya*, 32(2), 155–170.
<https://doi.org/10.26742/panggung.v32i2.1854>

Akbar, R., & Rachmi, N. (2023). Humor as religious communication in digital media. *Journal of Islamic Communication Studies*, 7(1), 33–49.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jics.2023.7103>

Al-Saggaf, Y. (2022). Digital da'wah and moral engagement: Authenticity and affect in online Islamic preaching. *Journal of Media and Religion*, 21(3), 145–160.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15348423.2022.2038441>

Bakar, N., & Sari, D. (2022). Mediated spirituality and the aesthetics of sincerity in Islamic entertainment. *Communication and the Public*, 7(4), 467–484.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/20570473221099874>

Barendregt, B. (2018). Pious creativity: Islamic popular culture in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 49(3), 369–387.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463418000258>

Barone, T., & Eisner, E. W. (2012). Arts-based research. SAGE Publications.

Danesi, M. (2004). Messages, signs, and meanings: A basic textbook in semiotics and communication theory (3rd ed.). Canadian Scholars Press.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 12(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-12.1.1589>

Fadilah, S. (2024). Islamic performativity and emotional resonance in Southeast Asian media narratives. *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture*, 13(2), 145–163. <https://doi.org/10.1163/21659214-13020004>

Farida, L. (2021). Gendered faith and spiritual labor in religious performances. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi UGM*, 18(4), 377–392. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jik.7054>

Firmansyah, H. (2023). Visual semiotics in contemporary Indonesian television dramas: Moral meaning and audience empathy. *Komunikasi dan Kebudayaan*, 15(2), 110–128.

Geertz, C. (1973). The interpretation of cultures. Basic Books.

Hasan, A. (2024). Performing repentance: Visual piety and affective da'wah in Muslim screen cultures. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 41(1), 77–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2024.2360987>

Heryanto, A. (2015). Identity and pleasure: The politics of Indonesian screen culture. NUS Press.

Hidayat, T. (2023). Autoethnographic narratives and moral pedagogy in Indonesian television. *Jurnal Kajian Seni dan Media*, 11(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.7454/jksm.v11i1.1965>

Hoesterey, J. B. (2016). Rebranding Islam: Piety, prosperity, and a self-help guru. Stanford University Press.

Karim, N. (2022). Emotional piety and Islamic masculinity in Southeast Asian media. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 32(5), 458–473. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2022.2075804>

Kunreuther, L. (2021). Affective piety and sound in contemporary Muslim publics. *Cultural Anthropology*, 36(4), 623–645. <https://doi.org/10.14506/ca36.4.06>

Kurniawan, B. (2023). Between piety and performance: Indonesian da'wah in popular media. *Media Asia*, 50(1), 82–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2023.2158901>

Mahmood, S., & Liew, K. (2023). The poetics of sincerity: Islamic aesthetics and performative faith. *Media, Culture & Society*, 45(2), 295–312. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437221144652>

Meyer, B. (2000). Making and unmaking religion: Humor and the negotiation of piety. *Social Analysis*, 44(1), 41–63.

Meyer, B. (2019). Sensational religion: Sensory cultures in material practice. Yale University Press.

Modood, T. (2023). Muslim identity and the ethics of representation in digital

da'wah. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 26(2), 225–242. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13678779221120647>

Nilan, P. (2009). The moral life of Indonesian youth: Islam, gender and identity. *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, 20(5), 1–16.

Nurani, A. S. (2023). Religious narratives and the aesthetics of sincerity in Indonesian visual culture. *Panggung: Jurnal Seni & Budaya*, 33(2), 122–138. <https://doi.org/10.26742/panggung.v33i2.2198>

Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2), 175–196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839032000060635>

Rahman, F. (2024). Religious sincerity and irony in contemporary Indonesian television. Gadjah Mada University Press.

Cultural Studies, 24(6), 874–890. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13678779211048321>

Rahmawati, I. (2022). The embodiment of Islamic ethics in religious comedy series. *Jurnal Komunikasi Indonesia*, 9(3), 211–230. <https://doi.org/10.7454/jki.v9i3.1564>

Schechner, R. (2020). *Performance studies: An introduction* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Setiadi, R., & Nur, W. (2024). Humor and humility in post-pandemic Islamic broadcasting. *Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi*, 15(2), 89–104. <https://doi.org/10.36768/jdk.v15i2.1022>

Spry, T. (2019). *Performing autoethnography: Critical embodiments and affective methodologies*. Routledge.

Wahyuningsih, S. (2015). Moral ambiguity in Indonesian religious cinema. *Journal of Indonesian Cultural Studies*, 8(1), 55–68.

Wahyudi, D. (2024). Performative da'wah and cultural hybridity in Indonesian television. *Panggung: Jurnal Seni & Budaya*, 34(1), 41–58. <https://doi.org/10.26742/panggung.v34i1.2401>

Wardatun, A. M. (2019). The screen as a spiritual mirror: Performing Islam in Indonesian drama series. *Asian Journal of Media and Religion*, 5(2), 87–103.

Zainuddin, F., & Kholis, A. (2021). Art-based autoethnography in religious film production. *International Journal of*