



# “Imam Muda” reality show: an analysis of non-verbal communication of young Imam

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## ABSTRACT

This research seeks to examine the nonverbal communication of an influential leader to change mind and behaviour of others, particularly in the field of dakwah. The portrayal of young Imam in the Malaysian reality show “Imam Muda” brings new landscape of muslim socialization process and implies significant values of dakwah. The definition of young Imam and its role as a progressive leader in a modern, multiracial society are described and illustrated in this 10-episode show. The researchers give special attention to nonverbal communication of the winner as this aspect is a determining factor of being a good and influential leader. The contestants may have more or less the same quality in terms of Islamic knowledge, but to gain social influence as an Imam, obviously nonverbal communication talks louder than verbal communication. The silent messages displayed by an individual are more countable and reliable in the eyes of people, as concluded in Mehrabian's 7%-38%-55% Rule. Five episodes of Imam Muda have been selected and five elements of nonverbal communication have been analysed – kinesics, paralanguage, haptics, appearance and proxemics. A thorough analysis of the top Imam is carried out to see to what extent he uses the nonverbal communication in interpersonal or mass setting that promote him as the most eligible young Imam.

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## Introduction

In the process of dakwah, Syamsul Bahri (2003) identified three important things that have been mistreated. Firstly, dakwah is oriented to perform ritual activities like prayers, fasting and pilgrimage. Secondly, the da'i put themselves as strangers to the public and therefore unable to reach the real situation. Thirdly, society is dynamic and always changing according to time, place and environment, but has been overlooked by the da'i.

Because of these factors, the image of Islam and muslims among non-muslims in Malaysia is arbitrary. Ushama (2004) found there are religious misunderstandings and lack of tolerance by Malaysian non-Muslims. Although they see Islam to be good, they hold an opinion that Muslims are not fully representing Islam in all walks of life. In general, a very small segment of the Malaysian non-Muslim society has positive opinions about Islam and Muslims. They are well educated or have good neighbours or have dealings with righteous Muslims. It appears that it is the Muslims' character and behaviour that play an active role in shaping the image of Islam and Muslims in their minds.

Mass media as the powerful tool to disseminate information to the mass circulation is expected to play its role in forming a new perception of Islam and its followers. Unfortunately, the religious programmes are limited in contents and creativity. Until 2009, Zaki and Mazni (2010) listed 191 religious programmes in public and private TV stations in Malaysia. While Rosidayu (2010) states the format of presentation revolves around the same format – talk show, documentary and magazine.

## Research questions

This research has placed three research questions as follows:

1. To what extent the top Imam utilized his nonverbal communication as a social leader?
2. Does the top Imam carry a likeable and approachable image?
3. How does reality show “Imam Muda” present Islam and its leaders?

## Literature review

Non-verbal communication is a branch of communication that is very important. Other than delivering the message with words, the non-verbal behavior is very effective, in fact more effective in certain situations. Among the channels for non-verbal communication are kinesics, physical appearance, artifact, touching, vocal quality, space utilization, time and silent utilization. The effective utilization of non-verbal communication leaves a big impact in the person's interactional cycle.

According to Burgoon and Hoobler (2002), there are two positive effects of the non-verbal communication in a person's social interaction. Firstly, if a person can send and receive non-verbal signals effectively, hence the higher are his physical attractions, popularity, and psychosocial abilities. Secondly, if a person showed skills in effective non-verbal communications, hence the more excellent his abilities are in persuading and influencing other people. This is in line with the task of an Imam as a social leader to change the mind and behavior of people, especially in a multiracial country like Malaysia.

To ensure the effectiveness of Islamic messages, Zulkiple (2001) stresses on five functions of nonverbal communication when sending information which are repeating, substituting, complementing, regulating and deceiving. All these functions exert the manipulation of nonverbal communication in order to optimize the audience's understanding.

Based on the study by Argyle, Alkema & Gilmour (1971), the nonverbal communication comprises voice tone and facial expression. A friendly attitude can be seen through warm face, soft tone of voice, open smile and relaxed posture. Neutral manner displays blank face and expressionless voice. While hostile attitude shows tense posture, frown with teeth showing with harsh voice.

In relation to leadership, Goman (2008) states that all leaders express enthusiasm, warmth, confidence, arrogance, indifference, and displeasure through facial expressions, gestures, touch and use of space. Even Peter Drucker, the renowned author and management consultant, once said, "The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said."

A classic study by Albert Mehrabian (1971) reveals only 7 percent of the total impact of a message can be attributed to the words used. Much more important are facial expressions (responsible for 55 percent of the total impact of the message), tone of voice (38 percent), and other forms of body language.

Zulkiple (2001) clarifies that non-verbal communication must be given due attention by the preachers because it can determine the effectiveness in conveying the Islamic messages. There are five functions of the non-verbal communication that can benefit a person while delivering an information that are, repeating what is said with actions, substituting words with actions, completing the meaning of words that is delivered with a suitable body language, arranging or controlling conversations, and creating an uproar or outcry like saying something that is sensitive through a body signal.

According to the study by Argyle, Alkema and Gilmour (1971), non-verbal styles contained a variety of combinations such as voice tone, facial expression and personality such as friendly with people that are shown through a friendly face, a soft voice tone, an open smile and a calm personality. A neutral face meanwhile is demonstrated when there are no specific expressions and a face without reactions. A bestial face next is shown through a rough behavior, a frowning face that revealed his/her teeth and as well as a tension face.

#### **The importance of non-verbal communication**

During the Ming and Qing dynasties thousands of Christian catholic followers that are known as 'the Jesuits' came to China to spread Christianity. This group did not solely depended on religious argument only, but also took into account suitable elements of non-verbal communication at that time. During the era, a person's identity and status in the society can be seen through cloths. Thus, Christian missionaries put on Buddha's robes when first arrived in China, later gradually wore cloths that reflected the Chinese's scholars. They were very concerned with appearance, speech and behavior that fitted to the life style of the Chinese society that utilized a lot of facial expression, voice tone and body posture to clarify feelings.

Mohd Yahya Mohammed Ariffin in his writings entitled 'Communication of Imam Syafie in the spreading's of Islam' stated that the spreading's of Islam through dakwah by Nabi Muhammad SAW were done through communication between human and human. Speech intelligent (al-khitabah) and correspondence (al-risalah) have been the methods of persuasive

communication that were used by Rasulullah and other Muslim scholars to expand and spread the religion of Islam.

Imam Syafie was also skilful at reading the al-Quran that he successfully attracted people to hear it. Even those who heard them cried too because of wistful and melancholy hearing the sweetness of the song melody of the readings. He was very wise at adjusting his melodious voice about the verses of grace and verses of dooms. This method of communication successfully attracted more Muslims at that time to be closer to the Allah's religion and at the same time increased the number of its followers (Pauzi 19989).

Goman (2008) stated all leaders demonstrated attitude that is always spirited, confident and friendly through facial expression, body posture, touching and space utilization. Peter Drucker, writer, professor and management consultant have said, "The most important thing in communication is to hear what is not heard of".

Goman also asserted that a leader needs to practice parallel communication – that is speech and body language needed to be consistent and not conflicting among each other while delivering a message that was meant to be. When conflict existed between verbal and non-verbal message, the listener will be confused. Unparallel communication leaves a negative effect on the presenter and eliminates the audience's trust. So too with the aspect of time – if the body language exhibited before or when throwing out the words, it is deemed as an open person and spontaneous. However, if the body language presented later after the words, it looks unnatural and illusory, and this obscured the delivered message.

In other fields, communication had been an important element in researches being conducted. Dr. Donald South, an expert American sociology emphasized the importance of non-verbal communication among human beings. He stated that humans communicate not only verbally, but also through non-verbal communication that included body behavior, eye contact, facial expression, physical touch and symbol. At a certain level, humans utilized body language to clarify feelings, generate ideas and delivering messages (Ed & Pooh).

Evolutionary psychology study found that human brain naturally gave reaction to non-verbal communication unconsciously. Professor Albert Mehrabian from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) in a popular classic study clarified that only 7 percent out of the whole informational impact found from words that were used. The effectiveness of messages a lot depend on the facial expression (55 percent) and voice tone (38 percent). The discovery from the Mehrabian study which was conducted in the year 1971 had become the basis of discussion and research till today and very significant to the communication activities that involved the motivational elements and change of attitude like the dakwah activity.

#### **Mehrabian's model of communication**

Albert Mehrabian is very famous in his writings on the importance of verbal and non-verbal communication. His experiments conducted centers around non-verbal communication that became the factors to the feelings of likeness and dislikeness; power and leadership; feelings of uncomfortable and unsafe; social attraction; and persuasion. Research on the inconsistency between feelings and attitude have often been said and known as '7%-38%-55% Rule'.

In his research, Mehrabian proposed two conclusions that are:

1. Three elements of communication formed feelings and attitude towards a person, that are words (7%), voice tone (38%) and body language (55%). This means that non-verbal

communication (voice tone + body language) contributed 93% as the factor whether a person is likeable or not. Other than being called the '7%-38%-55% Rule', it is also known as 3V's (verbal, vocal and visual).

2. Elements of non-verbal communication are very important to convey feelings and attitude. If words do not parallel with voice tone and body language, the listener will trust more on the voice tone and body language demonstrated compared to the words spoken.

This discovery often became reference to communications and leadership consultants as well as political campaign managers. It also became the basis in searching for personality that is said to be able to bring about the desirable images (such as lovable, popular, successful, masculine or feminine) and also in methods to choose product, services or company name to increase consumer attraction.

Mehrabian in his popular book entitled 'Silent Messages' discusses few aspects of non-verbal communication. Among them include:

1. Communication that is inconsistent between verbal and non-verbal communication – 7%-38%-55% Rule which he discovered have received wide-spread attentions especially in the field of arts and popular media
2. Persuasion – what is the form of non-verbal communication that is important in effective persuasion?
3. Individual style of communication – how can we clarify the communication style of a person and what are basic things that are needed in the communication style demonstrated? How can we identify the person's problems in non-verbal communication and increase effective communication?

#### **Becoming a likeable preacher**

To influence attitude and behavior of other people, a person must be likeable to people. When a missionary communicates, there are a few matters that make him a likeable individual that his messages easily stuck in the hearts of the listeners or audiences. According to Abdullah (2001), three factors that determine how far the work in dakwah is effective are:

1. The missionary himself – a missionary only gets to influence peoples who like him. Research showed that human like's individuals that have three factors in himself that are the first is physical handsomeness and social handsomeness; the second is personal value, level of education and attitude; and the third is frequent interaction with his target group. Touching on the physical handsomeness, studies by psychology experts prove that appearance, good looks, movements and face played important roles in increasing the influence of a person. Meanwhile, social handsomeness is looked at in terms of interesting face, a good family background, noble, highly educated, surrounded by good friends, involve in good leisure activities, married with a good partner and posses a good social image.
2. The message conveyed – a missionary is able to conquer the hearts of other people when he conveys matters which are likeable to his target group. A missionary cannot influence his targets if the people do not like to hear matters that are said to.
3. Style of language – a missionary can influence his targets not only because the topic discussed interest the targets, but the style of language and its presentation also is of interest and likeable. There are some religious speakers who spoke using techniques that were unsuitable with the human nature like calling or spoke with a nagging style and uses negative words as though they are pure and their targets are dirty.

The three factors above formed a package that is needed to be given attention to become a likeable missionary. Clearly, this package is parallel with Rule 7%-38%-55% which concluded the domination of non-verbal communication as the determining factor to level of likeability towards a person. Aspects of appearance and language skills are branches of non-verbal communication skills that formed a perfect package to become the popular missionary.

#### **Non-verbal communication in conveying dakwah**

Prof. Dr. Andi Faisal Bakti from the Islamic University of the state of Jakarta stated that dakwah knowledge is the twin brother to the communication knowledge because dakwah that utilizes the right communication techniques have strong influence to encourage people change mind, emotion and behavior.

Prophet Muhammad SAW as a leader and a great missionary has shown very potent dakwah leadership characteristics through non-verbal communication as support to al-tabligh bi al-qawl or conveying through speeches. In the business of dakwah, al-Quran has reflected that the usage of wise non-verbal communication can facilitate dakwah as recorded in the surah Ali Imran verse 159 which means:

*"Then because of mercy (flowing) from Allah (to you O Muhammad), you are gentle to them (friends and your followers), and if you are being rude and stubborn, of course they will run from your surroundings"*

In another verse, Allah said in surah an-Nahl verse 125 which means:

*"Call to the road of your god (O Muhamad) with wisdom and good lesson, and debate with them (the one you call) with the best way".*

Based on the verse above, there are three matters that needed to be given attention to convey dakwah whether to invite to do good things, preventing evil or change attitude and behavior that are:

1. Wisdom
2. Good advice
3. Argue in a polite manner

Wisdom in dakwah needs the preacher to know the method to convey dakwah in a different way based on background, situation and degree of acceptance. Wisdom also meant wise and gentle styles of language, thus leaving good effects, without using violence and coercion.

Good advice not only are details of the words that contain lessons, but needed some conditions that are it must be sincere, have good purpose, appropriate and advisor showing examples. When all the four conditions have been implemented, then only the true meaning of a good advice that is said in the verse above have been fulfilled.

Debate can be utilized when facing people who likes to oppose and stubborn because it needed arguments that are strong and convincing. Hence, voice tone, hand movements and body posture need to be managed wisely when conveying arguments because the purpose of a debate is not to spark a fire dispute, finding enemies or gain notoriety, but to convey Allah's dakwah.

#### **Young Imam's Program**

Breaking a tradition of invention, this is a way of life. This is the expression that is very synonym to the reality program of Young Imam at the Astro Oasis channel which started airing on May 28, 2010. The program that received cooperation from the Federal Territory's Department of Islamic Religion (JAWI) is

trying to elevate the imam status in the eyes of the society, at once making imam as a competent society leader.

Taking the reality show concept, a total of 10 young people's aged between 19 to 27 years was selected through a series of auditions held in several states. They were gathered at the Federal Territory's Hostel Mosque for three months to undergo the process of formation of a selected imam under the guidance of a principal titled Mudhir and two mentors titled Mursyid consisting of Datuk Hassan Mahmood as well as Ustaz Shahrizan Daud and Syed Mohd Norhisham Tuan Padang. It was hosted by Ustaz Dzulkarnain Hamzah. the period of three months, they are needed to sit down for written exams about topics given to them and undergo practical sessions relevant to the current issues. Evaluation is done 100 percent by the Mudir and both Mentors based on their performance of the achievements in their written exams of 50 percent and practical exams of 50 percent.

#### Analysis of Selected Episode

In the search of the Excellent Young Imam, an analysis was done on the Young Imam Ashraf for answering two main questions:

- i. Did he bring a likeable missionary's package?
- ii. To what extent the non-verbal communication fully utilized by the champion young imam?

#### Episode 2

Assignment: With the theme "Born" the contestants were asked to meet the girls who has delivered unlocked-wed babies at a rehabilitation centre, Dar as-Saadah in Kuala Lumpur. They worked in pairs and were assigned to counsel a young, sensitive mother. Ashraf was paired with Hizbur and both of them were already married with no children. On that day, Ashraf wore a white corporate shirt, a pair of black pants and black songkok. The attire demonstrated the image of a pious person and they came to give advice and spiritual guidance that the girl needed. They confronted a wild girl and has had a sexual affair with foreigner. They met at a sewing room, a place which seemed comfortable and familiar to the girl. Ashraf took a good step when he introduced himself and Hizbur as older, married men. This move could lessen her unpleasant feelings to disclose her history to the strangers. During the conversation Ashraf displayed a relaxed posture with open arm and maintained the eye contact. Asraf listened attentively to the girl and showed nonjudgemental attitude towards the girl.

In task no. 2, each pair had to prepare a presentation on the issue of baby dumping. As usual, Ashraf wore a blue shirt with black pants and songkok. He introduced himself with a smile, clear voice, standing straight to the audience behind the rostrum. During presentation, he utilized high rate of gesticulation with high rate of facial activity that suits with what he delivered. In his speech, he used anaphora or repetition "the baby is being thrown away, the baby is being buried lively, the baby is being burnt" when describing the critical situation of the abandoned babies.

#### Episode 5

In the episode 5, the assignment was to prevent *maksiat* among unmarried couples in selected areas in Kuala Lumpur. The young imams are divided into 3 groups, namely As-Siddiq, Badar, and Khalifah. With the cooperation with Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur Islamic Religion Department, the purpose of this operation is to prevent social issues such as *maksiat* among the people in Kuala Lumpur. For example, couples i.e. a man and a woman who are not married were arrested for suspicion of doing *maksiat* in the cars, parks/public

areas and hotels after 12 midnight. According to the *Syariah* or the Islamic Law, a man and a woman cannot indulge in sexual activities before marriage. They were *tarbiah* in a proper manner by the young imams. During the *tarbiah* session, Ashraf, one of the Badar group members utilized a soft approach as taught by the prophet Muhammad S.A.W. He included *hadith* in his *tarbiah*. During his *tarbiah*, he gave advice and motivates the arrested couple. Although the young imam Ashraf have the religious knowledge, the non-verbal approach utilized in the *tarbiah* is important so that message can be delivered. For example, when he talked, he showed his passion during the *tarbiah* session. His manners, voice and intonation, the way he spoke showed his confidence. His expressive tone of voice made the listener pick them up easily, and make them realize emotionally. Ashraf personal appearance was clean and smart showing that he was a professional and reliable. He was not wearing a *songkok* during *tarbiah* session to avoid appearing too serious. He showed natural gestures without exaggerative movements. For example, he kept his arms and hands wide open and strong eye-contacts when communicating messages. During the mind test, the *Mursid* praised Ashraf on his attitude of accepting criticism. This was because during ambush, he was seen to be too excited or being dominant. After being commented on that, he quickly realized and change his ways of action.

#### Episode 7

Theme for episode 7 was parenthood. In the briefing of weekly assignment, the principal highlighted a question "How to become the best father?" In this episode, the five remaining contestants were asked to visit an orphanage centre, Darul Fuqaha in Kajang. Each contestant was trusted with three male orphans aged between 13 to 15. Boys at this age are growing to maturity, thus according to Islamic teaching, they need special attention and guidance physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually as a preparation to be young adults. Approaching these boys was just another challenge for the young Imams to prove that to be a good Imam, is to be a good father. Ashraf became the father of three boys – Ridhuan, Amir and Hakimi. In their first meeting, they sat in a circle which showed proximity and closeness. This practice had been exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) when conducting an *usrah* (discussion) with his followers. It indicates that everyone is important and no one left behind. In the relationship between Ashraf and his adopted sons, they get similar attention from the father. Ashraf maintained his eye contact and smiling face. In the *tajwid* class (to improve Quranic recitation), Ashraf taught them in a classroom setting, equipped with chairs, tables, and white board. This formal setting of learning environment suited with the nature of subject taught because in Islam, learning and reciting the Quran is compulsory for each individual. Ashraf conducted the class well with a clear voice and sometimes moved to and fro and get closer to the boys. When it was time to leave the boys, Ashraf and his sons hugged each other. Each time he hugged his sons, Ashraf tapped lightly the boys' shoulders and pet gently their heads. When Amir, the youngest and the smallest son cried, Ashraf bent gently and whispered to Amir's ear to be strong.

#### Episode 9

In episode 9, the assignment was to visit an old folk's house, Rumah Seri Kenangan, Seremban Negeri Sembilan. The objectives of the visit are basically to understand the life of old folk's residence, and identify factors that make young imam adopted father live in that house. All young imams will be

evaluated by written evaluation (50%) and practicality (50%). However before all the young imams brought to old folk's house, young imam Asyraf was assigned to deliver a *tazkirah* before *khutbah* during the Friday prayer at Masjid Jamek Sultan Abd Samad, Kuala Lumpur. In preparing his *tazkirah*, he decided on bringing the not so popular story of sahabah in order to gain attention from jamaah. Language style that young imam Asyraf used was not a formal language, but rather a daily usage language. This is quite a good approach since delivering *tazkirah* is to make people more understand in not so formal situation. For example, in term of paralanguage, he frequently uses an emphatic intonation with moderate rate of speech. His appearance also moderate in nature, with using plain white jubah and white kopiah. This is a good decision, since giving such *tazkirah*, perception of the jamaah is much important. Next, is the assignment to visit an old folk's house in Seremban. Young Imam Ashraf was given a Chinese-Muslim converts (*mualaf*) as his adopted father. He looks naturally closed with his adopted father. He maintained his proximity with his adopted father, with high frequency of eye contact. He also frequently initiated touch with his adopted father. He is also not straight away discuss or looking directly factors why his adopted father live there. He is also displayed a lot of relaxed posture, with lot of smiles and nods when having discussion with his adopted father.

#### Episode 10

In the final episode, only two Young Imam's candidates continued the competition to be crowned as the Excellent Young Imam. They were asked to sit for a written exam (50%), practical exam in their own village (20%) and stage exam (30%) which was shown live in television from the *Muktamar* Hall Islamic Centre, Kuala Lumpur. Both the Young Imams have showed every skill in which they possessed and clear enough the nonverbal communication of the Young Imam Ashraf was more visible and properly utilized when doing the practical exam in his hometown, delivering *tazkirah*, answering questions on the stage and steady reading of the holy verses from the Al-Quran, further qualified himself to be crowned the Excellent Young Imam.

#### Young Imam Ashraf in the final episode

##### Practical test in village

9.30 pm – Upon arrival at Gelugor Village, Pulau Pinang, Ashraf, wearing the Young Imam's corporate shirt and a black *songkok*, was greeted well by his family and the village people. His parents greeted his arrival with a tight hug, which was long and warmth. With the smile stayed on his lips, he always bowed his body when reaching and greeting hands of the older people.

4.30 am – Ashraf led the *qiamullail* at the State Mosque of Pulau Pinang wearing grey robe and a white kopiah. His face was *khusyuk* and his forehead was corrugated while reading the *doa*. They prayed in the dark because according to Ashraf, a calm atmosphere, quiet and dark like this can give opportunity to the congregation to express their regrets and sense of servitude to Allah without any shame.

9 am – A visit was arranged to National Secondary School Teluk Kumbar 2, Pulau Pinang, a place where Ashraf have served as an educator before. On that day, Ashraf put on a pair of black coat and a *songkok*. When arriving at the school compound, he was greeted by a *kompang* team. With his smile always carved on his lips, he walked straight and was seen to reach out his hand first to greet the staffs and students while shaking hands. While walking to the school hall, he raised his hands to the female staffs and waved towards thousands of students present with their cheerful faces. Before leaving the

school, Ashraf said goodbye to all citizens there by waving his hands towards the students that were situated along the corridor of the school building with his face satisfied and cheerful.

12.30 pm – Ashraf was trusted to read the *khutbah* and became the imam for the Jumaat prayer at the Mosque of University Sains Malaysia. Wearing a robe and a white *kopiah*, Ashraf as usual reached out his hands first to the congregation that was waiting outside the mosque. Before the time for the prayer comes, Ashraf delivered a *tazkirah* with a clear voice, upright body and calm facial expression. When reading the *khutbah*, his body was straight while his left hand holding a *cokmar*, his eyes looked to the whole congregation, his voice was very clear and smooth and pitch changed high and low.

2.15 pm – An act of *gotong-royong* (mutual help) to clean the graveyard area and around the mosque at *Sungai Gelugor* was held. Ashraf also participated in the clean-up work including pruning the tree branch using a jig saw without feeling awkward. Just like other people, Ashraf wore a t-shirt, sport pants and slippers. What was remarkable was that Ashraf successfully gathered all the village residents' man and woman from the stage of children, teenager to adults cooperatively and earnestly in succeeding the *gotong-royong* activity.

4.15 pm – Ashraf took the village people to a *riadah* activity, that was playing futsal at the sport centre. Donning a t-shirt, pants and sport shoes, Ashraf acted as a captain. When it was time for the *Asar* prayer, he invited all the players to stop and led the solat *Asar* congregation in the futsal field.

8.00 pm – The final activity recorded when Ashraf was in his hometown is the *doa selamat* ceremony held in his home. On that night, he completed with a green Malay dress and black *sampin* appeared fresh without looking lethargic or tired. Joyfulness clearly radiated when greeting the arrival his two good friends that is Young Imam Aran and Young Imam Nuri, not only from facial expression but also touching communication which was demonstrated.

##### Delivering *tazkirah* live on stage

The challenge of delivering *tazkirah* live in front of the audience on the *Muktamar* Hall Islamic Centre stage is a big test to go through. Ashraf delivered a *tazkirah* entitled *Saidina Umar's Question* centering on the importance of *solat*. During the five minutes given the opportunity to deliver the *tazkirah*, Ashraf fully utilized the existing space on stage by moving forward, left and right of the stage, while his eyes always focused towards the audience. He strengthened the words delivered through hand movement and effective facial expression. His voice tone was also controlled and alternately high and low according to the message delivered. Every word was spoken fluently and looked spontaneous with occasional pause. Non-verbal message occurred simultaneously and consistently with his verbal message. Story-telling skills exhibited by Ashraf was very interesting because the Al-Quran itself contained six thousand verses in the form of stories. Abdullah (2001) recommended that Islamic missionaries use story-telling skills as the tool to convey their message because the story-telling strategy had been practiced by the missionaries when introducing the Islamic religion in the Malay Era.

##### Mind test on stage

The next challenge was giving pithy answers and wisely on the questions asked by the *Mudir* on stage. Although did not know what form of question given, Ashraf did not show any restlessness or feeling of nervousness when answering. He stood straight and his right hand always on top of his left hand while waiting his turn to answer. A total of two questions asked that

were, how to pull more congregation to the mosque and can Islam be running parallel to the current rapid development? In one of the answers given, he reads a piece of the Al-Quran's verse which meant, "It was not I who sent you, (O Muhammad) but as a *rahmat* to the world". While saying the word *rahmat*, Ashraf lifted his head and looked up to show that *rahmat* comes from Allah, and while saying the phrase to the world, he lifted and opened up both hands to picture such a vast universe. He looked calm and able to give full answers that the audience applauded tremendously.

#### Steady reading of the holy verses of the al-Quran

The next challenge is steady reading of the holy verses of the Al-Quran from surah *at-Taubah* verse 18 through 26. This time both the young imams read those verses alternately. With the steady melancholic voice, clear and fluent, this final challenge tried to highlight the smoothness and the fluency of reading al-Quran verses. This skill will strengthen the social influence of the young imams in the eyes of the people as their credible society leader.

The Young Imam Program has triggered a new phenomenon in missionary approach not only in Malaysia, but its impact was also felt throughout the world. Throughout its existence, this first religious reality program in the world received international media coverage including British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC); Agence France-Presse (AFP); Reuters; Cable News Network (CNN); Al-Jazeera, The Wall Street Journal, The Straits Times, Singapura; *Der Spiegel Magazine* from Jerman and International Herald Tribune, New York. They were also present while recording the program live and gave positive reactions on the beautifulness of the Islamic religion showed through this program.

These positive reactions from them, who are non-Muslim indirectly, proved that personality and character featured by young imams' participants left a positive impact to the audience even though they did not really understand the Islamic message conveyed. This was very significant with the Rule 7%-38%-55% which stressed the non-verbal communication factor can influence the level of likeableness of the listener and audience.

The young imam champion Ashraf have said, "*I should change the way I face the people. A lot of new things I have learned especially ways to communicate and face the society from different stages of age. Among those I never expect were self-image formation, protocol, and ways to walk which I never care before and this is the beautifulness of Islam if really internalized well.*"

#### Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the non-verbal communication of Young Imam Ashraf, he has the characteristics of a likeable missionary and has a high social influence to influence his target audience. Facial expression, body language, paralanguage, clothing fashion, touching and every element of verbal communication supported his personality as a society leader. His appearance was parallel to 7%-38%-55% Rule that emphasized on the importance of non-verbal communication in developing credibility and competency.

Pattern of communication of Young Imam Ashraf was natural and his clue for non-verbal was accepted by other people. Nevertheless, some aspects of human expression as seen as cannot be learned and was characterized as general culture, however both of this forms of communication was used by him. Consciously we focus on verbal communication meanwhile non-verbal communication controlled interpersonals including while giving some reactions.

Young Imam Ashraf had clues of verbal communication that are prominent (strong cues) like friendly facial expressions that were given attention by other people, hence strengthening stimuli perception on him. Interpersonal situations which he expressed during interactions were given attention by other people. Young Imam Ashraf demonstrated communications that was consistent between verbal and non-verbal and showed positive clues throughout the program.

As said by the host of the Young Imam, Hj. Dzulkarnain Hj. Hamzah on every time the reality program was on air, the strength of Young Imam falls on his knowledge, argument and sakhshiah. One of the mursyid, Shahrizan Daud said too, a top imam is a person who is flexible and cares about how to talk and dress.

This showed that the Young Imam program wants to produce a community leader that not only eloquent and knowledgeable, but also close and friendly to the community. Apparently, the first Young Imam product has a preacher's package that is likeable and the awaited challenge is that is he able to maintain it in the middle of a society that is full of challenges.

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**Table 1: Assignments of the Young Imams during the 10 weeks/episode**

| Week/Episode | Problem that was handled  | Activity  |
|--------------|---|---|
| 1            | Management of bodies/corpse which were not claimed                                    | Bathing (of the corpse), shrouding, praying, burying and reading of talkin.   |
| 2            | Birth of illegitimate child and throwing of babies symptoms                           | Visiting Dar Assaadah and penetrating the hearts of girls that have given birth to illegitimate child.  |
| 3            | Children that do not get the love of family   | Visiting the House of Nur Salam and serving the orphans.  |
| 4            | Handling teenager activities, particularly the “mat rempit” problem                   | Advising teenagers with motorcycles who violated the traffic rules in collaboration with the Johor’s Head Quarters of Police Contingent.  |
| 5            | Prevention of immoral activities  | Joining the prevention of immoral activities operation around Kuala Lumpur and giving tarbiyah to them who have been detained with the collaboration of JAWI.   |
| 6            | Sources of halal food from the slaughter  | Raiding the slaughter house with JAWI and demonstrating slaughtering of chickens according to syariah needs.  |
| 7            | Educating children with parenting knowledge   | Educating orphans aged 13 to 15 years from Darul Fuqaha using the touch of a father.  |
| 8            | Handling divorce cases  | Provide a counseling service to problem couples who wanted separation.  |
| 9            | Concerned with the isolated elderly   | Caring and playing the role of a son to the elderly people at the House of Seri Kenangan, Negeri Sembilan.  |
| 10 - finale  | Demonstrated ability, specialty and skills as the competent imam to lead the society. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community outreach at their own villages</li> <li>• Conveying tazkirah</li> <li>• Answering questions on the current issues spontaneously</li> <li>• Showcasing the tunes of the al-Quran</li> </ul> |