Communication Strategy of Cyberculture-Based Religious Leaders in Creating Religious Harmony in Multicultural Communities in Medan City

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Abstract. This research deals with communication strategies of religious leaders based on cyberculture. The aims of this study are to explore the communication strategies of religious leaders based on cyberculture in achieving religious harmony for a multicultural society in Medan, to know the effectiveness of religious leaders based on cyberculture, the last to investigate the defiance of religious leaders in achieving religious harmony for a multicultural society. The study was designed in qualitative research, which the data of this study was the association of Religious Harmony (FKUB), for collecting the data, the researcher uses interview, observation, and documentation, then it's analyzed in four steps, they are data reduction, data display, data collection, Verifying. Based on analysis data it is found that there are some social media that have been used by religious leaders as the communication strategies in achieving religious harmony, namely: Website, TV, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Zoom Meeting. Those will be used by them to deliver their religious message and create mutual tolerance in the society. In addition, these communication strategies are very effective in maintaining religious harmony surrounding multicultural environments, so Medan obtained the appreciation in the Harmony Award. Lastly, the defiance of religious leaders in achieving religious harmony in Medan city is quiet enough and lacks complexities, it is based on the fact that religious tolerance is very splendid among multicultural societies.

Keywords: Communication Strategies, Religious Leaders, Cyberculture

Abstrak. *Penelitian ini membahas tentang strategi komunikasi para pemuka agama berbasis cyberculture. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi strategi komunikasi tokoh agama berbasis cyberculture dalam mencapai kerukunan umat beragama bagi masyarakat multikultural di Medan, dan juga untuk mengetahui keefektifitasan tokoh agama berbasis cyberculture, selain itu juga untuk mengetahui hambatan tokoh agama dalam mencapai kerukunan beragama bagi masyarakat multikultural. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif, yang mencakup tentang Perkumpulan Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB), dalam pengumpulan data peneliti menggunakan wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis dalam empat langkah yaitu reduksi data, tampilan data, pengumpulan data, dan Verifikasi. Berdasarkan data analisis ditemukan bahwa ada beberapa media sosial yang telah digunakan oleh para tokoh agama sebagai strategi komunikasi dalam mencapai kerukunan umat beragama, yaitu: Website, TV, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Zoom Meeting. Platform tersebut digunakan oleh mereka untuk*

menyampaikan pesan agama mereka dan menciptakan toleransi timbal balik di masyarakat. Selain itu, strategi komunikasi tersebut sangat efektif yang dapat menjaga kerukunan umat beragama di lingkungan multikultural, sehingga Kota Medan memperoleh apresiasi dalam Harmony Award. Terakhir, tantangan yang dihadapi oleh tokoh agama dalam mencapai kerukunan umat beragama di kota Medan cukup sedikit dan minim kompleksitas, hal ini didasari oleh toleransi beragama yang sangat kental di kalangan masyarakat multikultural.

Kata Kunci *: Strategi Komunikasi, Tokoh Agama, Cyberculture*

INTRODUCTION

Technological advances are something that cannot be avoided in the midst of modern society, because technological developments go hand in hand with the development of knowledge, every innovation created provides benefits in human life (Ngafifi, 2014). Technology and information have changed many aspects of people's lives, especially in terms of interactions between people. Humans, in facing the flow of technological developments, always adapt to changes in the existing environment by developing sensory abilities and increasing their ability to adapt and survive (Saefudin, 2008).

Technology plays a very important role in the process and practice of communication in industrial society (Kurmia, 2005). The presence of smartphones and the internet has made lifestyles and ways of socializing completely digital and online. Changes in interaction patterns of communication, entertainment and shopping illustrate the role of the internet in changing social rituals that have been carried out as daily activities. When viewing goods in online stores, enjoying movies presented via internet services, reading through notebooks or gadgets, chatting via Facebook or Skype, as well as a series of activities facilitated by an internet connection are real forms of cyberculture phenomena (Ishanan, 2017).

In simple terms, cyberculture can be understood as activities that appear in everyday life through the internet or other digital media so that it has the opportunity to create imaginative spaces, but has an impact on our physical existence. According to Fuch, virtual culture (cyberculture) allows culture to be seen as a dynamic process where structures and actions are interconnected with one another (Fakhruroji, 2017).

These changes will indirectly affect the pattern of life and religious attitudes according to technological advances that occur. Information spread through technology will provide convenience in various matters including

religious issues and understandings (Purwanto and Nuha, 2020). The existence of differences when managed with a good communication strategy can create harmony, mutual respect, work together and strengthen in a multicultural society. The city of Medan is known for the diversity of its people, this can be seen from the diversity of ethnic groups, religions and languages in this region (Dafa Rizky Prayoga et al. 2021). It is noted that there are several tribes and ethnicities in Medan, namely the Batak, Javanese, and Malay tribes, all of whom have a variety of cultural, linguistic and customs riches (Sipayung, 2021).

Based on data compiled by BPS in 2019, it was recorded that the population of the city of Medan was 2,279,894 million people, with 35.39% Batak ethnicity (Toba 20.93%, Mandailing 9.36%, Karo 4.10%, others 1. 00%), Javanese 33.03%, Chinese 10.65%, Minangkabau 8.60%, Malays 6.59%, Acehnese 2.79%, Tamils and others 2.93%. The adherents of religions consist of 64.53% Muslims, 26.10% Christians (20.99% Protestants, 5.11% Catholics), 8.28% Buddhists, 1.04% Hindus and 0.06% Confucianists. The languages used by the people are Indonesian, Malay, Batak Toba, Javanese, Hokkien, Minangkabau, Aceh, Tamil, Mandair and English. North Sumatra is also the province with the highest number of internet users on the island of Sumatra. Data compiled from the online media of the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) in 2019 there were 75.3% of people in North Sumatra using the internet and social media. Information was collected from 5,900 samples who filled out questionnaires and the results of interviews with internet users obtained information that 24.7% of the total population of North Sumatra had no contact with the internet. If seen from the total population of 10.5 million people in North Sumatra, 3.5 million remain who do not use the internet (Ariyanti, 2019).

Seeing the great diversity in the city of Medan certainly has the potential to cause friction or conflict between religious communities. This is due to differences in views within a group or ethnicity, resulting in difficulties in communicating and can affect interactions between ethnicities (Meilinda Hardi 2021).

Religious leaders have a role to prevent conflict from arising in a heterogeneous society, with a good communication strategy religion can become an glue and unifier to create harmony among religious people amidst existing differences. Based on data showing the high number of internet users

in Medan, religious leaders can use cyberculture to carry out dialogue in the midst of a multicultural society.

To dissect this research, the authors use several theories and concepts:

1. Communication Strategy.

Communication Strategy is a guide for communication planning and management to achieve a goal. Anwar Arifin said that in formulating a communication strategy means taking into account the conditions and situations (space and time) that are faced and which will be challenges in the future in realizing goals effectively and efficiently (Efendy, 2003).

Determining the right communication strategy that has been carefully prepared from planning to the evaluation stage can help the communicator to achieve the goals set for the communicator or target. In general, the communication strategy can be interpreted as all efforts made to realize ideas, ideas by communicators to achieve the goals that have been set can run effectively. Communication success is obtained by strengthening planning, identifying strengths and weaknesses in each component involved in it. The elements in communication that must be fulfilled according to Harold Lasswel namely:

Who?

Says what?

In which channel?

To whom?

With what effect?

The implementation of the five elements above will basically be determined by the type and form as well as the area of work of the institution, organization and even the government that implements them.

2. Roles and Functions of Religious Leaders.

Role of Religious Figures Religious leaders are prominent people who have deep religious knowledge and experience and serve as role models/ role models in society (Burhan, 2017). Religious figures have a role in spreading religious teachings, leaders in their respective religions such as clerics, ustadz, pastors, clergy, and so on, bearers of the mandate from God, coach the people, guide the people to invite to good and prevent evil (Hasyim, 2004).

The main tasks of religious leaders in society are Develop various thoughts as a reference for the people in living their daily lives, Guiding, and become a reference in explaining the halal and haram of things, Able to communicate well with the people, Maintain, preserve and enforce teachings in accordance with the demands and rules of religious teachings, Want defending and defending the rights of the people for the common good, fighting against religious enemies. (Eksan, 2000)

In addition to the above, religious leaders also play a role in minimizing the occurrence of conflicts or clashes between groups of adherents of different religions, because the religious teachings conveyed by religious leaders are more acceptable and can be implemented by each adherent of the religion (Basuki and Isbandi, 2008).

3. Cyberculture and Cyberspace.

Concepts about Cyberculture and cyberspace (Bell and David, 2005), can be interpreted as a two-way relationship or interaction between humans and computers (internet) in forming a culture. Cyberculture can also be defined as the concept of a culture, where machines (internet networks and computers) have a role in creating new cultures (Lister, 2009).

There experts argue that cyber culture is a product produced by the internet and social media with various models of interaction in it ranging from virtual communication, economics, entertainment, etc. which form a new culture that is different from before (Alice, Lengel, and Thurlow 2004).

Internet and computer networks have a role in the construction of culture in social life. This can be seen from the creation and establishment of sites to exchange information on certain topics such as similarities in hobbies, music, films, religion, sports to correspondence both locally and globally, so that cyberculture indirectly plays a role in forming a multicultural society (Bennet, 2005).

These spaces in internet and computer networks which we later know as cyberspace form cyberculture, cyber-religion, cyber-love, cyber-hate, and other cyberspace (Fakhruroji, 2017). A characteristic of cyberculture is the formation of a culture through social relations that are cognitive by using computer media to build identity and credibility in a society (Alice, Lengel, and Thurlow, 2004).

Cyber culture was born as a societal phenomenon due to the impact of the development of information and communication technology which provides experience of interactions between individuals and groups mediated by cyberspace (Purwanto and Nuha, 2020). Directorate General of Informatics Applications, Kominfo for 2019 shows that there are 150 million active internet users and 150 million active social media users in Indonesia.

Among the 150 million active social media users in Indonesia, they are divided into social network and messenger users. The most use of social networks is on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, and Twitter, while the most messenger users are on WhatsApp, Line, FB Messenger, and BBM. From this it can be concluded that cyberculture is closely related to the development of science, technology, and social media. If it is used for a positive purpose, then it can be used as an effort to create religious harmony, otherwise if it is used for a negative purpose, it will cause conflict. For this reason, the focus of this article is to analyze the importance of the role of religious leaders in managing cyberculture in realizing religious harmony and the challenges and obstacles it faces.

This research is a type of descriptive qualitative research, which is intended to collect data and information about a symptom according to what it was at the time the research was conducted. Primary data sources were collected from in-depth interviews with religious leaders using the snowball sampling technique, observations in this study by observing social media from each religious institution and documentation to view literature relevant to the research topic (Arikunto, 2013). This technique is used to facilitate researchers in obtaining clear and more detailed data, where if there is still a lack of data, the researcher will continue to dig until the data is sufficient.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Communication Strategy of Cyberculture

Communication Strategy of Cyberculture -Based Religious Figures in Creating Religious Harmony in Multicultural Communities in Medan City. The culture of communicating online is increasingly popular, especially in the current 5.0 era. All aspects of life utilize technology and online media

in communicating without exception in the field of religion (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019).

course, religious leaders who are also the main players in spreading religious teachings must also be able to face the era of cyberculture, one form of which is to take advantage of applications or social media such as whatsapp, facebook, instagram, twitter, zoom meeting, google meet as a means of communication. and spread religious teachings to its adherents. Activities carried out with the internet provide many conveniences in carrying out the process of interaction and communication between humans. Distance and time are no longer a barrier to sharing information and communication. In fact, the research results show that 54.37% of the younger generation, such as students, learn religious knowledge from the internet, blogs and websites (Syafruddin and Ropi, 2018).

Based on the data the researchers collected through interviews with social organizations and several religious leaders in the city of Medan, the researchers summarize some of in Table 1 below:

Tabel 1

The social media used in spreading religious teachings by religious leaders

No	Organisasi Kemasyarakatan	Media sosial yang digunakan
1	MUI Kota Medan	Website, TV, youtube, facebook, instagram, zoom meeting
2	FKUB Kota Medan	Website, zoom meeting
3	PGIW Kota Medan	Youtube, facebook
4	Kemenag Kota Medan	Website, youtube, facebook, zoom meeting
5	Pemerintah kota Medan bidang Kesra	Website
6	Majelis Tinggi Agama Khonghucu Kota Medan	WhatsApps Group
7	Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia	WhatsApps Group, zoom meeting

Elismayanti Rambe, Novebri dan Resdilla Pratiwi Communication Strategy of Cyberculture-Based
Religious Leaders in Creating Religious Harmony in Multicultural Communities in Medan
City

	Wilayah Kota Medan	
8	Perwakilan Umat Buddha Indonesia Wilayah Kota Medan	WhatsApps Group, zoom meeting

Even though during the Covid-19 pandemic the communication between religious leaders and the community underwent changes, this did not dampen the intention and desire of the people in the city of Medan to continue to be enthusiastic about listening to religious studies delivered by religious leaders via social media. The application of this communication strategy provides an understanding to all of us that cyberculture, if used properly, will provide positive value and can prevent small conflicts from occurring that lead to major conflicts.

The Effectiveness of Communication of Cyberculture-Based Religious Leaders in Creating Religious Harmony in Multicultural Communities in Medan City. The internet and social media continue to provide increasingly up-to-date innovations in the field of communication and information that force users to continue to adapt so as to create a new world, namely the virtual world, which provides major changes in the process of human life. Human changes in carrying out activities of daily life which are carried out face to face are changing by using social media networks such as via whatsapps, telegrams, zoom and so on. Something new that causes change in society is always related to the diffusion of innovation, where change is driven by the spread of new knowledge. According to Rogers, there are four elements that always exist in the diffusion of innovation, namely: 1) innovation, 2) communication channels, 3) time and 4) social systems. These four elements are interrelated, innovation is related to ideas, actions or goods that are considered new by a person and his community (Bungin, 2010).

The new concept stretches between the concepts of introduction, persuasion and the decision to use it (adoption). The diffusion of innovation takes place in a social system that has begun to be open to new ideas, at least marked by changes in insight, views, attitudes and changes in behavior.

The high number of internet users in the city of Medan indicates that the people of Medan are open to social changes, so that it becomes a lifestyle in society. The phenomenon of people who experience changes in habits by using the internet or cyberculture is also used by religious leaders as an opportunity to spread tolerance values by using social media. The research team conducted interviews with Dr. Abd. Hakim Siagian was one of the religious leaders in the city of Medan, who is also the administrator of the Forum for Community Harmony (FKUB) in the city of Medan. He said that, "In today's digital era messages related to religious tolerance, religious moderation, religious harmony must be voiced through various social media, no longer just dialogues or seminars that are conducted face to face, this needs to be remembered Most of the people of Medan city have middle and high education, so the need for the use of communication and information technology is very high, if messages are conveyed via social media, they will quickly reach and be received by various groups of people in Medan city.

According to Dr. Hasan Matsum, MA as a religious figure and Chair of the Medan City MUI is of the opinion that, "Religious leaders see the use of the internet and social media as having an influence on the spread of religious teachings, especially Islamic da'wah during the current Covid-19 pandemic, the Medan City MUI itself uses the website , facebook, instagram, twitter and youtube to help the effectiveness of conveying Islamic teachings in the midst of society, for example facebook, Medan city MUI uses fanspage so that more people can be followed not only from the people of Medan city, but also from outside the region , there the MUI will answer religious questions addressed to the Medan city MUI, so that the community can get enlightenment or answers to questions addressed to the Medan City MUI, besides that the Medan city MUI also uses teleconferences and zoom meetings in meeting activities, dialogue/discussion , and seminars".

In line with what was said by the head of the Medan City MUI, he said that since the Covid-19 pandemic, the use of social media as a form of cyberculture in religious activities has been very effective as an effort to spread religious teachings and also assist the government in reducing the spread of the coronavirus. Based on non-participatory observations made

by the research team while participating in a workshop involving interfaith leaders in the city of Medan, it can be seen that the relationship between religious leaders is very well maintained due to the strong commitment of each religious and community leader to always maintain harmony among the people. religion and respect for adherents of other religions in the midst of a multicultural society in the city of Medan. The following is the population data obtained from the Ministry of Religion in Medan as an illustration of the diversity of religious adherents in the city of Medan.

Represented by the community welfare sector, Mr. Agus Maryono said that, the city of Medan is a city with minimal inter-religious conflict, even if there is a potential for conflict, it usually occurs due to personal/social matters which are then drawn to religion, for example the problem of establishing a house of worship that has not yet received a permit or problems the status of a residential house was changed to a house of worship, but even this did not turn into a major conflict because the city government immediately coordinated with the FKUB to mediate with related parties.

Based on the results of interviews and observations conducted by the research team, it can be concluded that communication carried out by religious leaders based on cyberculture is very effective in realizing religious harmony in a multicultural society in the city of Medan. In the midst of the diversity of ethnicity, religion, race and culture, the people of the city of Medan can still live in harmony and side by side. In fact, in 2020 the city of Medan won a harmony award because it is considered a city that is multicultural but harmonious and responsive to potential conflicts. This is where social media is used as a supporting forum in voicing and echoing the values of harmony and harmony between religious communities.

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B. Challenges of Religious Figures in Realizing Cyberculture

Challenges of Religious Figures in Realizing Cyberculture-Based Religious Harmony in Multicultural Communities in Medan City. Religious leaders have an important role in realizing harmony between religious communities, but of course in realizing inter-religious harmony there are various kinds of challenges from religious leaders in harmonizing religious harmony in the city of Medan (Burhan, 2017).

As for some of the challenges faced as follows: first, religious leaders must be responsive and wise in utilizing and using technological developments in preaching, because it can be seen by all people from various cross religions second, religious leaders must be wise in communicating and disseminating information related to religious teachings third The community is not fully ready to face the challenges of cyberculture, especially in communicating and using social media. Fourth, the emergence of religious leaders who do not fully understand religion, so that information circulating cannot be confirmed. , so that it can lead to hoaxes and conflicts between religious communities.

In addition to the challenges above, there are also several obstacles in creating harmony between religious communities (Wirman, 2018), namely: The greater the desire of a religious community to increase the number of followers of their religion rather than increasing faith, an unstable social environment that results in harmony can be created but reduced religious practice, the will to build houses of worship regardless of the situation and condition of the number of adherents of the local religion so that it offends the feelings of religious people, potential conflicts are resolved by relying on quantity so that they do not touch the root of the problem, shifting ordinances of life based on kinship or mutual cooperation towards individualistic life. However, after conducting observations and interviews with major religious figures in the city of Medan, these problems almost never arise in the multicultural society in the city of Medan. In the results of several interviews and observations conducted by researchers, there were several efforts made by religious leaders in creating inter-

religious harmony in a multicultural society in the city of Medan, including: Strengthening the basics of internal harmony between religious communities dProviding socialization of love in inter-religious life religion and society, Providing understanding to the public that differences in beliefs are a reality of life that can beautify the meaning of religious life, Eliminate feelings of suspicion towards adherents of other religions eighth, Make full efforts to always instill spiritual values about divinity so that there are no deviations in societal values and the ninth social religious value, Making social media a positive forum for spreading information on inter-religious harmony ten, Calling on the public to be wise in social media without involving elements of SARA in every post posted. do.

CONCLUSION

Most of the religious figures in the city of Medan have participated in using the advancement of information technology as a vehicle for spreading religious principles. Social media that are often used by religious leaders and religious organizations in the city of Medan in disseminating religious teachings and principles to create religious harmony include websites, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TV channels, and zoom meetings.

In the 5.0 era, the use of the internet in an effort to create religious harmony, especially in a multicultural society in Medan City, is a must. The challenges of using it for religious leaders in dealing with cyberculture include hoax news that spreads among the public whose truth is uncertain, content that spreads propaganda causing uproar, easy access to pornographic and pornographic content. and suggestions for further research.

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