



Communication strategy of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) Bali in maintaining religious harmony in the Bali Province Region in 2022

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

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Bali Province is a reflection of socio-cultural diversity, including in terms of religious diversity. Seen from the presentation of religious harmony, the social interaction between Hindus and Muslims in Bali is dynamic. Bali Province represents Indonesia, so the MUI Bali region also has a similar role and influence on the world view of religious harmony in Bali. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. The result is, MUI Bali's communication strategy is based on communication planning that adapts to the local culture. This helps ensure that communication makes it easier for MUI Bali to integrate with the local community and maintain religious harmony. Communication strategy used to handle religious issues is consolidating the FKUB and directly referring to related parties to produce decisions that all parties can accept. Aside from FKUB, the term Nyama Braya is also promoted by MUI Bali to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood among the people of Bali Province. The MUI of Bali Province has also established a cross-religious women's community and a cross-religious youth community with the aim of preserving the continuity of religious harmony for future generations. This effort is made to ensure that not only religious leaders but also the people of Bali Province uphold the principles of harmony. Two-way approach and community participation are integral parts of this communication strategy. This helps ensure that the communication established facilitates the integration of the MUI of Bali Province with the local community and together they uphold religious diversity.

1. Introduction

The province of Bali reflects social and cultural diversity, including religious diversity. According to data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in 2022, the Muslim population in Bali reached 434,941 individuals, making it the second most widely practiced religion in the province. Hinduism, on the other hand, holds the first position with a total of 3,732,178 individuals (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2022).

In December 2021, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia announced the interfaith harmony index. Overall, the interfaith harmony index increased by 4.93% compared to the previous year. However, Bali Province experienced a decrease, ranking fifth with a score of 77.95%, whereas in 2019, Bali Province had a score of 80.1% (Ayu, 2021). Even though Bali Province achieved an interfaith harmony index ranking among the top five nationally, it doesn't mean that social relations between religious communities in Bali are entirely without issues. In the harmonious interactions between religious communities in Bali, there are occasions when problems arise, leading to disruptions in social interactions between them. In other words, social interactions between religious communities in Bali are dynamic in nature.

In 2002, the Bali Bombing incident occurred, and it continues to leave a lasting trauma on the people of Bali to this day. Moreover, the impact of the Bali Bombing incident has given rise to Islamophobia among some of the Balinese population, causing some to perceive Muslims as terrorists in Bali. On the day commemorating the Bali Bombing, which took place on October 12, 2002, Muhammad Syauqillah, the head of the Counter-Extremism and Terrorism Agency of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), stated that the Bali Bombing incident has raised awareness among many parties regarding terrorism. This awareness has taken various forms, including government policies and fatwas issued by the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) in Bali Province. Syauqillah also reaffirmed that terrorism is not a part of Islamic teachings and, conversely, terrorism must be eradicated. (Ridlo, 2022).

The government also took a firm stance by implementing the Law Number 15 of 2003 on the Eradication of Terrorism Crimes. (Peraturan Presiden Indonesia, 2003). Following that, the MUI issued Fatwa MUI Number 3 of 2004, declaring that terrorism is a prohibited (haram) act. (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2004). The issuance of the Indonesian Ulema Council's fatwa regarding terrorism was a decisive action to dispel the rumors and fears in the community, particularly in Bali Province, that falsely associated Islam with terrorism.

The implementation of the G20 in Bali Province is a significant global event that garners attention from various aspects such as diplomatic, political, cultural, and religious relations. This wouldn't have been possible without the crucial role played by the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), particularly the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) of Bali Province, in maintaining harmony among religious communities. The MUI of Bali Province engaged in consolidation efforts with the district-level MUI and religious leaders from Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, Christian, and Catholic communities in Bali. These collaborative efforts aimed to create security, tranquility, comfort, peace, and harmony during the G20 event. (BALI TOP NEWS, 2022).

The MUI plays a role in conveying the message of Islamic preaching and knowledge in Indonesia (Subhan, 2023). Indirectly, as Bali Province serves as a representation of Indonesia, the MUI of Bali Province also holds a similar and influential role in shaping the world's perception of religious harmony in Bali. Therefore, questions arise about what the role of the MUI is and how it contributes to maintaining harmony among religious communities in Bali.

In carrying out its role and responsibilities, the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) of Bali Province certainly requires various aspects to implement its programs and goals. One of these aspects is the role of communication as the primary channel for MUI Bali Province in achieving the desired harmonization goals. The communication role includes the use of effective communication strategies so that the messages conveyed can create mutual understanding. The ongoing harmony indeed requires effective communication strategies from the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) of Bali Province, making it crucial to be examined. In the context of communication, this is significant because the communication strategies of MUI Bali are expected to serve as a role model for countries and organizations rooted in the Muslim faith that exist in regions with a minority Muslim population. Hence, researchers are interested in studying the communication strategies of MUI Bali Province that contribute to maintaining religious harmony in the region of Bali Province.

2. Method

The method employed in this research will be qualitative in nature. This method will address questions such as what and how the role of the MUI in maintaining interreligious harmony in Bali is. The research will make use of a case study analysis method tailored to the organizational context. In general, a case study is an approach that delves into the details of individuals or groups experiencing specific events (Noor, 2017). The case study is used to analyze how the communication strategy of the MUI in the Bali Province maintains religious harmony in the Bali Province.

Primary data sources will utilize direct interviews with the General Chairperson of the MUI in the Bali Province, the Chairperson of the Interreligious Relations Commission of the MUI in the Bali Province, and members of the Bali Province community. To complement data validation, documentation techniques will be employed to supplement the data obtained through interviews.

The data analysis process involves the systematic collection and organization of interview and documentation data. In this research, a qualitative analysis techniques is used in line with the approach suggested by Miles and Huberman (Sugiyono, 2018). This technique encompasses data collections, data reduction, data presentation, and, lastly, drawing conclusions. Data validation is a technique used to ensure that the obtained data is not invalid. According to (Sugiyono, 2018), in this research, the author will only employ the credibility test with data source triangulation. Data source triangulation involves sources of information from within the MUI in the Bali Province and the Bali Province community.

3. Result and Discussion

Data Findings

In the researcher's findings, the MUI of Bali Province has a strategy for maintaining religious harmony by being part of the Forum for Interfaith Harmony (FKUB). Additionally, there is a local term called "Nyama Braya," which signifies fostering brotherhood with all religions and ethnic groups, with each religion and ethnicity agreeing to the concept of brotherhood. Each religion also has its own term, like "Nyama Selam," used to refer to fellow Muslims. These terms are used by each religion, and they come together under the term "Nyama Braya" to foster brotherhood among all religions and ethnic groups. The MUI of Bali Province utilizes this forum and these terms as a strategic communication pathway to maintain religious harmony. The MUI of Bali Province also established a cross-religious women's community and a cross-religious youth community with the aim of preserving the continuity of religious harmony for future generations. These efforts are made to ensure that not only religious leaders but also the people of Bali Province embrace the principles of harmony.

4.1. Communication Strategy

According to (Efendy, 2019), communication strategy is a combination of communication planning and communication management to achieve a specific goal. In the context of maintaining interreligious harmony, this strategy is necessary to minimize religious conflicts, ensuring the continued peaceful coexistence among followers of different religions.

Formulation of Communication Strategy

Understanding the Audience

According to Wilbur Schramm, communication is the process of sharing information, ideas, or attitudes (Sokowati, 2020). The MUI of Bali Province frequently conducts visits to other religions, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, and other recognized religions. These visits aim to foster a sense of closeness and mutual openness, allowing these religions to get to know and understand each other better. One of the benefits is that it becomes less likely for religions to be easily provoked, and if an issue arises within any religious community, it's easier for other religions to collectively build understanding.

Crafting the Message

In this process, the MUI of Bali Province formulates messages by considering the target audience, adjusting to cultural backgrounds, age, and the receivers' backgrounds, ensuring that the messages are easily understood and capture their attention. This approach is what has enabled the messages from the MUI of Bali Province to be well-received, resulting in a high level of religious tolerance among the communities in Bali Province.

Determining the Method

The visits conducted by the MUI of Bali Province are not only carried out formally but also through informal means to build familiarity. For instance, they visit events of other religious communities like weddings and even pay informal visits to the homes of members of different faiths. The communication strategy employed by the MUI of Bali Province uses the canalizing technique. In this approach, communicators seek to understand individuals or groups to plan

communication message delivery that aligns with the values and standards of these individuals or groups. Gradually, the conveyed messages become more acceptable as a result.

Media Selection

The choice of media as a communication channel is also based on adapting the message to be conveyed, the target audience, cultural background, age, and the recipients' backgrounds. In the process, the MUI of Bali Province, when delivering messages about religious harmony to young people, typically organizes meetings with youth communities such as the cross-religious women's community and the cross-religious youth community to engage in shared activities like beach cleanups. The use of social media is also leveraged as a communication medium, given the high level of youth activity on social media platforms.

The Role of the Communicator

The role of the communicator is also crucial in influencing the target audience. Therefore, the MUI of Bali Province emphasizes the use of communicators who are both suitable and experts in their respective fields. There are various divisions within the organization of the MUI of Bali Province, and these divisions are tailored to address specific issues. For instance, in matters related to interfaith harmony, there is a division called the Commission for Interfaith Relations, and this division is specifically responsible for communication related to harmony and interfaith relationships in Bali Province, including the dissemination of messages about harmony and addressing sensitive issues related to harmony and interfaith relationships.

4.2. The communication strategy of the MUI of Bali Province in handling negative issues

According to Everett M. Rogers and D. Lawrence Kincaid in the book (Sokowati, 2020), the definition of communication is the process in which two or more individuals share or exchange information with each other, ultimately leading to a profound mutual understanding. One of the essential aspects of communication is to convey information about both personal and organizational matters to external parties so that they are aware and can comprehend, thereby fostering mutual understanding of culture and religion for the purpose of tolerance.

The strategy of the MUI in Bali regarding cultural differences is to align with the cultural practices of the majority religion while also informing that there are certain points that cannot be followed either culturally or religiously. The term culture refers to a set of knowledge, stories, language, rules, rituals, customs, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, or traditions that connect individuals to a group of others at a given time (Sokowati, 2020). For example, during the Hindu holiday of Nyepi, the MUI in Bali states that Muslims should observe Nyepi as a form of tolerance and respect for the cultural traditions of the Hindu majority religion in Bali. As a result, Hindus also show tolerance and respect for the culture of the Muslim community in Bali, for instance, by allowing Muslims to perform the Friday congregational prayer in the mosque during Nyepi, provided that no loudspeakers are used, and they abide by the rules of Nyepi. According to the journal by (Sipuan et al., 2022), this approach emphasizes authenticity and the development of traditions. Furthermore, MUI Bali strives to be able to speak Balinese, making it easier for the Balinese community to accept messages about religious harmony.

In every religion, there are rules and regulations for their followers. These rules can sometimes differ, leading to potential conflicts between different religious communities, such as issues related to what is considered permissible (halal) and forbidden (haram) in terms of food. It's not uncommon, in various non-Muslim religious events or when Muslims are guests, there might be non-halal food, and in such cases, the MUI of Bali provides guidance to ensure that the food is accepted without causing offense. This guidance is given both verbally and not verbally, with the goal of maintaining respect and appreciation for offerings from non-Muslim communities, thereby promoting religious harmony and preventing conflicts among different religious communities.

In addition to cultural and religious differences, the MUI is also confronted with several sensitive issues that encompass various aspects, including issues related to radicalization and

extremism, interfaith harmony, as well as matters of morality and ethics. Muslims in Bali are often scapegoated for acts of terrorism and actions that can trigger conflicts between religious communities. Terrorism and conflict-triggering actions do not only occur in Bali but also take place worldwide, which has led to Islamophobia among the Balinese community. The communication strategy of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) in Bali Province to address dynamic issues and harmony is by organizing meetings with the Interfaith Harmony Forum (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama - FKUB) and relevant parties to discuss related issues. The messages conveyed include messages of harmony, peace, and explanations regarding the Islamic understanding of violent actions such as terrorism. FKUB serves as an important and strategic forum for both maintaining harmony and resolving issues related to harmony and peace.

The MUI in Bali Province is under the spotlight from both a perspective and informative point of view. Therefore, it serves as the primary message sender in addressing issues related to religion. The messages delivered are based on facts and data from the field. For instance, when there are issues about terrorism associated with Muslims, the MUI in Bali Province will investigate the accuracy and provide information about the religion based on its rules from the Quran and Hadith. This is done to address questions regarding whether Islam is indeed a religion of terrorism or whether it genuinely states that anarchic behavior and killing people guarantee entry into paradise. The communication strategy of the MUI in Bali Province to address negative issues regarding Muslims involves internal discussions. After that, the council consolidates related parties to provide independent statements without taking sides and defending anyone. The council also collaborates with the district-level MUI to do the same. The MUI in Bali Province doesn't always have to communicate sensitive issues related to Muslims to the public; instead, it connects the concerned community with various relevant stakeholders to resolve the problems quickly and prevent the emergence of new perspectives that could worsen divisions.

The choice of media for conveying the message must be reliable and independent, without exploiting issues for personal gain or the benefit of specific individuals or groups. The MUI in Bali Province primarily uses its own media outlets, including those at the national level and those specific to the Bali Province branch, to inform the public about sensitive issues related to harmony and coexistence. This is done to prevent any form of manipulation or the spread of hoaxes for specific interests. The message recipients are the communities affected by and following the current issues. Typically, the message recipients of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) are the entire Indonesian population and the global community because Bali Province is an international tourism destination and draws attention from countries worldwide. The effectiveness of the communication carried out by the MUI in Bali Province has had a significant impact, especially on the people of Bali Province. One of the effects of the messages is that the Muslim community, in particular, and the people of Bali in general, have experienced reduced religious conflicts and any religious issues that arise can be resolved. Harmony and coexistence are restored as they should be. This also serves as a benchmark for the Bali Province branch of the MUI in measuring the success of the communication strategies implemented.

4. Conclusion

The Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) in Bali Province continues to work on developing effective communication strategies to maintain religious harmony in Bali Province. These communication strategies are based on communication planning that aligns with local culture. Furthermore, religious forums like the Interfaith Harmony Forum (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama or FKUB) serve as both a platform for conveying messages of harmony and a place for discussions regarding various issues. The communication strategies of the MUI in Bali Province are also grounded in an understanding of religious coexistence and harmony. In addition to FKUB, the term "Nyama Braya" is also used as a symbol of unity and harmony among religious communities in Bali Province. This symbol is promoted by the MUI Bali to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood in the Bali community. The MUI in Bali Province has also established a community of women from various religious backgrounds and interfaith youth with the aim of preserving the continuity of religious harmony for

future generations. This effort is made to ensure that not only religious leaders but also the general population of Bali Province adheres to the principles of coexistence and harmony.

In any issue involving the Muslim community, the MUI in Bali Province prioritizes truthfulness without taking sides and only consolidates with relevant parties to prevent the problem from being exploited for purposes that could trigger hoaxes or hate speech against certain ethnic or group, thus minimizing issues that could lead to conflicts and disrupt the harmony among religious communities in Bali Province. The Forum for Interfaith Harmony (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama or FKUB) serves as an important and strategic platform for both maintaining harmony and resolving issues related to coexistence and religious harmony. The two-way approach and community participation are integral parts of this communication strategy. As a result of these efforts, the level of tolerance among religious communities in Bali Province is high, and the prevention of interfaith conflicts can be effectively managed. This helps ensure that the communication that has been established over time has facilitated the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) in Bali Province to integrate with the local community and jointly safeguard religious harmony.

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