

Extension-Worker Communication Strategy Using Islamic Education During the Covid 19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Islamic Extension-Workers work for the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia to provide religious counseling to Indonesians. They have actively promoted Da'wah Islamiyah through taklim, religious talks, and other activities. After the COVID-19 pandemic hit Indonesia in early March 2020, religious development initiatives shifted. To stop the spread of COVID-19, large crowd-drawing events were banned. This study addresses how Islamic religious teachers can communicate religious development through Islamic education during the COVID-19 epidemic. This study takes a qualitative approach. The qualitative research topic is sociological in nature. This study used observation, interviews, and documentation. This study examined data reduction, display, and conclusion. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Islamic Extension-Workers advised on the above specialities and communicated government policy and debated COVID-19. Islamic Extension Workers coach religiously after building a communication strategy. Strategy is implemented. Coaching religion extended communication planning: Islamic education through regular Islamic studies, Covid Task Force engagement, report and evaluate. Communication planning for Islamic Extension-Workers in North Aceh District's religious expansion lacks SWOT Analysis and other current management practices. Islamic Extension-Workers were not informed of the Vision and Mission decrease. The Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia is expected to support the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion of North Aceh Regency build internet connection facilities to improve religious development between extension workers and clients/communities.

Keywords: *extension-worker, communication, strategy, da'wah medium, Islamic education.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Religious development in Indonesia has so far been carried out by the various Religious Counselors, known as Islamic Religious Counselors for Muslims. Islamic Religious Counselors or Extension-Worker are part of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, which acts as an extension of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia to provide religious guidance to people on the Republic of Indonesia's territory. Religious teachers must be able to carry out the four main functions that have been allocated to them, which are educational, informative, consultative, and provide community protection ("Duties of Religious Extension So that Da'wah Reaches the Community," 2020). According to the decision of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance number 298 of 2017, the main task of Islamic religious instructors is to work with the Directorate General of Islamic Community Guidance of the

Ministry of Religion to provide guidance and counseling in order to create an Islamic society that is devout religious and prosperous physically and spiritually.

As people who operate directly in society, Islamic religious instructors must have numerous competences in order to carry out their tasks, including religious knowledge competence, communication competence, social competence, and moral competence.

So far, Islamic religious teachers have been highly active in propagating Da'wah Islamiyah through various activities such as assemblies of taklim or recitations that can be held freely, lectures or religious speeches, and other activities. However, since the Covid-19 Pandemic hit Indonesia in early March 2020, there have been changes in the way religious development operations are carried out. Activities that drew large crowds were expressly prohibited during the Covid-19 epidemic for the sake of benefit and interrupting the Covid-19 chain of circulation.

The Covid-19 pandemic has afflicted millions of people worldwide. The Covid-19 epidemic arrived in Indonesia on March 2, 2020, and is still active today. This pandemic has become a dreadful calamity for humanity. This transformation also had an impact on the communication method utilized by Islamic Religious Extensionists to transmit their da'wah messages. Whereas extension workers used to do their work in person, they now have to do it remotely or online. The usage of internet-based information technology is frequently used as an alternative in carrying out activities such as Live Streaming on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. Or through media posts that can also utilize YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, or other social media, and can also use the facilities to conduct video conferenc

An Islamic extension-worker must optimize communication techniques when carrying out da'wah development; after all, da'wah and communication are both processes of delivering messages with a specific aim. As a result, the communication strategy can be employed as a mature plan to effectively build da'wah values in society. Similarly, the success of da'wah communication is a change in people's behavior for the better, making them more devoted and pious to Allah SWT.

Setting the goals and objectives of preaching can help to optimize the delivery of da'wah messages. Before preaching, a Dai must thoroughly comprehend the qualities of mad'u or the intended audience. Dai must exercise caution when carrying out da'wah because of differences in cultural factors and locations of habitation. The key objective is to avoid misunderstandings caused by differences in meaning and language, as well as the topics presented. By referring to Surah An-Nahl verse 125, there are numerous da'wah tactics that can be applied, including wise human appeals, good lessons, and good dialogue and discussion. Rasulullah used numerous tactics in bringing out da'wah, according to Zainol Huda, including discussion methods, presenting stories, and analogies.ing utilizing the Google meet service, Zoom meeting, Skype, and WhatsApp groups.

After deciding on the best approach, determining the medium is essential for optimizing the da'wah process. There are numerous mediums that can be developed in modern da'wah and used during a pandemic. The use of communication medium helps the delivery of da'wah to be performed.

Following the selection of the appropriate method and media, the Islamic Extension-Workers must conduct an evaluation, as is the concept of leadership and management. Evaluation is critical for determining the level to which the success of the da'wah has been achieved.

The formulation of the problem in this research is how to plan the communication of Islamic religious instructors in religious development through Islamic education during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative technique, which attempts to offer a description or knowledge of how and why a phenomena or reality occurs. The subject of qualitative research is sociological in character and is studied as such, as is the emphasis of attention on natural events. In this scenario, the researcher will employ the descriptive analytical method.

This study was carried out at the Office of the Islamic Religion Counselor in North Aceh District. From February through September 2022, this study lasted 8 (eight) months.

Researchers searched for and discovered data on Islamic Extension-Workers within the scope of this study when choosing research informants. After selecting and sorting by region, make your decision. The researcher identified informants who were members of the congregation or respondents from the extensionist's da'wah, and the determination was also based on information provided by the extensionist of Islam. Determination of research informants based on direct involvement can give researchers with thorough information. Especially in terms of the data needed for this study. The research subject and the da'wah object performed by the subject in the study are the sources of data for this study.

Primary data sources are obtained from people who directly understand the information related to this research, namely the Head of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion of North Aceh, 10 PNS Islamic Religion Counselors in North Aceh, and congregations or da'wah targets in the work area North Aceh District Islamic Religion instructors as many as 5 people.

In this study, data and information were gathered through observation, interviews, and documentation studies. Because the researcher concurrently served as an Islamic Extension-Workers in North Aceh District, participant observation was used in this study. The purpose of the interviews in this research is to answer all of the questions that have been raised in the formulation of the problem, which, in general, the purpose of the interview is to find out the communication planning of , Islamic Extension-Workers in developing the duties of Islamic Religious Instructors. Data collected from documentation studies can be considered very accurate because it is based on data documented by the Ministry of Religion. This study's data were analyzed in three stages: reduction, data display, and conclusion.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

During the pandemic, Indonesian society, particularly Aceh, suffered numerous issues. These issues can sometimes escalate into larger issues. We can deduce that some policies in general have an effect on society based on the various policies that the government is forced to adopt in the interests of citizens' safety and health.

The Covid-19 pandemic is far from ended; there have been various consequences, including the mental health of the population, which has generated numerous issues. Workload, fear of being infected with Covid-19, negative stigma of carrying the virus and being far from family, alcohol consumption, workload from home, income, gender, limited food, and fears of infection are the factors that cause stress and mental health disorders in the community during a pandemic.

As part of their obligations, Islamic Extension-Workers might provide religious or spiritual guidance as a deterrent or cure for persons suffering from mental problems and stress during a pandemic. So far, religious or spiritual advice has been effective to improve the daily lives of mentally troubled people. Given the magnitude of the damage, the role and program of Islamic religious education are urgently required to carry out societal mental reconstruction. Islamic religious educators can provide religious teaching through

a variety of programs and the use of information technology, specifically social media as a medium of da'wah.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the function of Islamic Extension-Worker was not only to provide advice in the aforementioned specializations, but also to serve as an extension of the government's hand in relaying various policies and debating Covid-19. According to the responses provided during the interview:

Our counseling activities during this covid are more directed at religious development related to community acceptance and increasing public awareness about the dangers of covid which has spread throughout the world (NI interview, 10 February 2022)

The first stage that must be carried out by Islamic Extension-Worker is to do program planning. The planning process begins with establishing the goals of the coaching program's implementation. According to the findings of interviews with several research participants:

In the first stage, we first determine what the goals are, the program adjusts to the objectives of the coaching, during this covid period we usually raise themes related to the epidemic. We need to provide understanding to the public that this epidemic is not something new in Aceh or in Islam in general. So what needs to be at issue is not the epidemic but how we respond to the outbreak (Hospital interview, 10 February 2022). If asked about planning, of course everything we have done so far has not escaped planning, especially since this is a program. Not only during Covid but before that we also had programs that were previously planned. If during the covid period, the most suitable program was a discussion about covid. Usually we include it as material in routine studies or recitations that we carry out for the congregation (IS Interview, 10 February 2022).

Planning for religious development also includes choosing communication media and methods. Islamic Extension-Worker must be careful when providing Covid-19 materials because to public mistrust. Religious extension workers prefer to do routine activities or recitations in social media groups because crowds are banned and health precautions must be updated. Social media groups are not an effective means to train instructors in religion, but with certain constraints, they can be used to implement the curriculum. However, some Islamic religious educators follow stringent health rules directly.

What I also know is that not all religious instructors carry out online programs, there are still many extension workers who continue to carry out face-to-face recitations, but more strictly implementing health protocols such as wearing masks, washing hands and sitting at a certain distance. Some people also won't be able to use technology, especially for people who are old it will be very difficult. So the activities are still carried out face-to-face at the meunasah or at the study center but complying with health protocols (Interview with Salamina, 12 February 2022).

So far, the programs we have created are usually chatted via grub-grub wa. Sometimes we send materials such as our own readings and video lectures to the public. There is also a video on YouTube, then we copy the video link and share it with the WA group (BH Interview, 10 February 2022).

Like it or not, the implementation of the program must continue, because if you let it go, the community will be increasingly absorbed by issues that are very troubling, especially

those related to those who are against the government. Therefore we also have to take advantage of social media such as Facebook and WA to continue sharing information about covid, yes what is being distributed is about religious lectures or materials on how to respond to covid in society (NI Interview, 10 February 2022).

Islamic Extension-Workers coach religiously after devising a communication strategy. A plan is implemented. Coaching religious extension communication planning: Recitations, Covid Task Force collaboration, and Report and Evaluate

The pandemic changed religious training in Indonesia. Islamic Extension-Workers usually provide religious guidance face-to-face, but now they must follow health guidelines and even employ internet-based communication tools.

Interviewees in this study stated:

Since the government prohibits crowds, we usually lecture in WA. We transmit reading material from numerous internet sources and distribute it, as well as videos of Acehese professors' lectures, especially on the corona virus.

Islamic Extension-Workers must choose media to provide community religious instruction. All groups can perform their obligations via online media during Covid-19. Islamic Extension-Workers have several communication channels for religious training.

Islamic Extension-Workers are found adopting persuasive communication tactics in its execution. The communicator's persuasion attempts must be founded on efforts to awaken the communicant's attention; with the aforementioned strategy, getting the communicant's attention will be simple. Attention can also be drawn by speaking style and the choice of words that pique the communicant's interest, whether it's data, facts, or anecdotes. Attention can also be gained by the communicator's look, which is accompanied by dazzling grins on his or her face. The study's findings reveal that religious teachers are more likely to employ the Public Relations approach, which is a communication method used to establish a positive image of organizational or community partners by honoring mutual interests, because it is tied to the community or congregation. Communicators must be honest, open, reasonable, and reciprocal in order to retain the common interest.

The Islamic Extension-Workers of North Aceh Regency collaborated with the Covid-19 Task Force in their various sub-districts throughout the stage of directly applying religious instruction. This is a preventative measure to ensure that all types of activities are carried out and have the potential to attract a large number of people who can be controlled by the Covid Task Force. This endeavor is accompanied by the adoption of a stringent health routine, beginning with hand washing with a mask and keeping a safe distance in the assembly or prayer room where the recitation is held.

In general, Islamic Extension-Workers in North Aceh District have been unable to adequately utilize digital technology. Similarly, clients and the general public have been unable to access information technology via social media platforms such as Whatsapp, Facebook, and email. Counseling is implemented face-to-face due to both parties' limited knowledge of information technology (Elder and Client/Community).

Public understanding of how to use technology is also a significant barrier, particularly in locations where the internet network does not reach. Internet access is critical, especially for religious direction during

this pandemic. Although not all programs are carried out utilizing media, certain programs are implemented that are limited and not ideal. Community engagement varies in number as well, but it can be stated that only a small number of people actively participate and are inextricably linked to their respective awareness.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Communication planning for Islamic Extension-Workers in carrying out religious growth in North Aceh District has not been properly performed in accordance with modern management demands, such as the absence of SWOT Analysis. Similarly, the reduction in Vision and Mission has not been effectively communicated to Islamic Extension-Workers.

The national government (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia) is anticipated to help the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion of North Aceh Regency complete internet connection facilities to enhance religious development operations between extension workers and clients/communities. Such as purchasing computers and cellphones, as well as strengthening the internet network.

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