

TRADITIONAL AND CONVENTIONAL SOCIAL COMMUNICATION PROCESSES FOR INCREASING TOLERANCE AND HARMONIZATION OF INTER-RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This research focused on the social communication process for increasing tolerance and harmonization of inter-religious communities in Indonesia. This research method used the case study design. Research data of this case study were collected through observations and in-depth interviews. The results indicate that the process of social communication between religions takes place dynamically in the community. It involves mutual interactions and respect for each other according to social norms and values adopted by the local community. By interacting and respecting each other, the social life of the community can be maintained to be harmonious, safe, comfortable, full of tolerance and harmony, and coexist in religious, cultural, ethnic, racial, and ethnic diversity. Based on research findings, all can be done through the social communication process for increasing tolerance and harmonization of social life among religious communities in Indonesia that the process of social communication is directly referred to as traditional and conventional communication.

Keywords: social communication, tolerance and harmonization, inter-religious, communities

INTRODUCTION

Communication activities are closely related to all aspects of human life as it is an inseparable part of social life. Communication activities are manifested in everyday activities. In human life, communication refers to the process of conveying messages, both verbally and nonverbally, in human life. The messages of the communication process can be in the form of thoughts or feelings that are expressed in language and symbols. Communication can also occur if there is a common meaning about a message delivered by the communicator and accepted by the communicant in the process of social life without exception to the life of religious communities in a particular community. The process of social communication aims to change knowledge, attitudes and behavior, and together create meanings or mutual understandings of both parties (source and recipient of the message).

Thus, communication cannot be separated from human behavior because humans need to communicate, and there is no life without communication. This matter

is also closely related to the nature of humans as social beings that cannot live without the help of others and that assistance is a manifestation of communication. Communication includes not only verbal language, but also facial expressions, paintings, arts, and technology. As a pluralist country, Indonesia maintains tolerance of many religions in the country in order to harmonize the religious life of the people under the unitary Republic of Indonesia. Harmonious comfort and social relations are created through communicative approaches, namely mutual understanding and mutual respect for all interactions in society.

It is unanimously recognized that communication is an essential element of each epoch and every society. Traditional forms of communication are, for instance, myths, story-telling, songs, proverbs, religious rituals, artistic, musical, dance, and theatrical elements, as well as ornaments depicted on pottery, textiles, and wood. These forms differ greatly from each other. They are being characterized among others by their own particular society; by economic, social, and religious characteristics. Myths give witness to reflections and observations of nature and

human beings. They convey a view of life and depict the position of the human being. On this basis, values and standards are shared, and rules laid down concerning behavior towards nature and relationships between (Gräf, 1995).

Indonesia is a religious country. It develops rapidly to address the problems and challenges of the nation, including social, cultural, economic, political, and technological challenges, as well as other aspects of social life. People of multi religions and beliefs, which include Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and the belief of God, are expected to live side by side harmoniously. They should communicate with each other. The harmony among religious communities can be created through tolerant communication and by upholding human values as a manifestation of the dignified life guideline of the Indonesian people, namely *Pancasila*.

The six major religions in Indonesia have great potentials to jointly develop the state through the differences. In Islam, differences are seen as *Rahmatan Lil Alamin*. Uniting differences can enrich the repertoire of thoughts to build a nation in this modern era of globalization to also get the grace of God the Almighty. All religious teachings in this world require peace, mutual respect, and love for fellow human beings. These values must be realized in social life in society. *Rahmatan lil alamin* can be realized through harmonization and harmony of life involving the religions, which always coexist in a multi-character and multi-cultural society with one social principle that is living together harmoniously. The concept of a harmonious life is supported by the teachings of Islam written in the Qur'an *surah Al-Hujurat* verse 10, "Surely the believers are none other than brothers. So, make peace between your two brothers and fear."

Social communication is an interaction process where a person or an institution delivers a message to another party so that the other party can capture the intended purpose of the deliverer (Sutaryo, 2005). There are several functions of social communication for people today. However, this research only deals with some aspects. The following description shows the aspects of the social communication function addressed (Sutaryo, 2005); first is giving information. Information needs to be conveyed to the community because the reality shows that (a) humans can only progress and develop if they know the values that need to be achieved; (b) not everyone has the same knowledge about the values that have been successfully achieved, regarding the facilities that must be used, and the dangers that must be eliminated; and (c) everyone has basic rights to get information that is useful for his life. Humanitarian organizations will run limp if the social system does not establish sources of information to broadcast what is useful for common life, not only matters relating to physical interests, but also matters of spiritual concern that are no less important to humans.

Second is giving guidance. Both directly and indirectly, communication serves to provide guidance for community members, a high-value message that can generate work enthusiasm, reviving a spirit that has been extinguished. Community members who deviate from the correct patterns of behavior can be developed on the right path. For example, farmers who do not know how to use fertilizers according to the right method for fertilizing plants will find the instructions they are looking for. Guidance is conveyed through messages (mandates), which are guided, agreed, rejected, denounced, reprimanded, supported or

opposed, taught or advocated, provided guidance on certain priorities among the many actions that must be taken. The third is giving entertainment. Not all citizens succeed in pursuing the ideals that have been instilled by many parties. There are some who experience failure and even frustration. So, they require entertainment, and this is a social problem that must be solved socially as well.

The practice of religion and communications are profoundly connected with one another. Religion makes use of different forms of communication that aim at disclosing reality and creating community; prayer and preaching, worship and witnessing, reading and listening to sacred texts, singing and sharing, prophetic discourse, ritual practice, and theological reflection (Hook, 2011).

Durkheim in Macionis (2017) has identified three major functions of religion that contribute to the operation of society. First is establishing social cohesion. Religion unites people through shared symbolism, values, and norms. Religious thought and ritual establish rules of fair play and organizing social life. Second is promoting social control. Every society uses religious ideas to promote conformity. By defining God as a 'judge', many religions encourage people to obey cultural norms. Religion can also be used to back up the power of political systems. In medieval Europe, for example, monarchs claimed to rule by 'divine right', so that obedience was seen as doing God's will. Even today, our leaders ask for God's blessing that implies that their efforts are right and just. The third is providing meaning and purpose. Religious belief offers the comforting sense that the brief lives serve some greater purpose. Strengthened by such beliefs, people are less likely to despair in the face of change or even tragedy. For this reason, it marks major life course transitions, including birth, marriage, and death, with religious observances (Macionis, 2017).

Talking about the study on tolerance and harmonization in diversity, Elly and Setiadi (2011) have proposed theoretically that pluralism consists of horizontal plurality, which is characterized by the existence of social relations based on differences in religion, ethnicity, customs, race, and ethnicity. Besides, pluralism consists of vertical regionalism and pluralism, which are characterized by differences in the social status of communities. Between the upper and lower levels, the gap is quite deep and very vulnerable to conflict, leading to social disintegration.

Religious tolerance refers to the ability to appreciate spiritual values, beliefs, and practices, which are different from others. This goal is a complex one due to the great diversity of religions and spiritual beliefs existing in the world today (Courtis & Cayton, 2018). According to Scanlon in Vurmo (2018), tolerance is a disposition to endure or bear other people's beliefs and practices with which one disagrees because he/she deems them to be false or wrong. As it can be put it, "tolerance involves an attitude that is intermediate between wholehearted acceptance and unrestrained opposition."

Religious tolerance is inverse of religious intolerance. It is the quality of tolerating or enduring other peoples' religious beliefs that are different from one's own. It could also mean the ability to endure or accommodate peoples from other religious beliefs different from one's religion. In essence, there is religious tolerance when a particular group accepts or accommodates the views, opinions of other opposing religious adherents (Raji et al., 2015).

Rede (2007) has said that religious tolerance may be described as the other side of the same ethical coin, as a concept of an ethics of duty. This means that freedom

of religion can be seen as a right corresponding with religious tolerance as a duty, "Your rights are my duties, and conversely." Tolerance can, in addition, be considered as a virtue, an attitude. Religious tolerance is demanded of states as a duty and individual persons as both a duty and virtue or attitude. On the one hand, religious tolerance is not a relativistic and self-contradictory acceptance of every kind of faith. On the contrary, tolerance is particularly relevant when facing beliefs of which one disproves. On the other hand, tolerance implies a basic acceptance, not of other faiths, but of other people's right to hold and manifest their faiths.

Each community has rules (values and norms) for its citizens. The rules applied by each community are different from each other. These rules include procedures, habits, or customs. Geertz in Elly and Setiadi (2011) have described the diversity of Indonesian people from various aspects, first is kinship, which leads to the basic bond of blood relations (offspring). It can be traced based on the line of fathers, mothers, or both. Second is race, which can be distinguished based on the physical characteristics of persons (hair, skin, and face shape). The third is the area of origin, which is the place of birth of the person who will give certain characteristics if the person is in another place, such as the dialect used, members of the organization that are regional, behavioral, and the use of the language of their respective tribes. Fourth is the various religions adopted by the Indonesian people. If religion is not integrated into the culture of the nation, the society will be divided into groups with strong primordial ties.

According to Harold Coward in Elly and Setiadi (2011), 'truth claims' and 'salvation claim', plus a narrow religious doctrine, will certainly thicken an ideology that is encouraging the growth of excessive fanaticism. The most important thing in the life of a plural society is the recognition and acceptance of differences so that the recognition and acceptance will have a positive impact on the religious life, because (1) by acknowledging and accepting differences, not only do people obtain true victory, but also contribute to harmony; (2) recognizing and accepting differences lead not only to tolerance but also to a deep understanding of each other; (3) recognizing and accepting differences do not mean eliminating individual or group belief commitments, they encounter various existing belief commitments.

According to Muzammil in Fadzil (2011), tolerance is an attitude of someone towards others, which involves two parties. It could be the tolerance of someone towards his/her own self or towards others, which is more common than the first. Tolerance happens in the situation in which conflicting disagreement occurs between two individuals or groups, and when there is no way for each of them to abandon their own concept in order to accept the concept of the other group. As a concept, tolerance means respect, acceptance, and appreciation of the rich diversity of the world's cultures, forms of expression, and ways of being human (Fadzil, 2011).

According to Elly & Setiadi (2011), there are two models of tolerance. First, passive tolerance is the attitude of accepting differences as factual. The second is active tolerance that is involving oneself with others amid differences and diversity. The essence of tolerance is to live side by side in peace and mutual respect amid the diversity of cultures, tribes, religions, and freedom of expression. With the attitude of tolerance, citizens of a community can coexist peacefully, harmoniously, and cooperate in overcoming various problems that occur in their environment.

Zuo'an (2013) has stated that freedom of religious belief is a common consensus of the international community and also the precondition and foundation for religious harmony. Without it, there will be no religious harmony to speak of. However, it is known that freedom of religious belief alone does not preclude hatred or conflicts among religions. Religious harmony takes the freedom a step further to offer people a new vision with which to address religious disputes and conflicts. There are many ways to realize religious harmony, among which religious dialogue is an important one. Only when religious harmony is considered the highest spiritual objective when it has a dialogue with clear direction and inexhaustible drive. It is needed to start from now, within oneself, with small steps, and push towards this goal in an unyielding spirit.

Meanwhile, religious pluralism emphasizes that every religion is required to recognize the existence and rights of other religions and be actively involved in efforts to understand differences in order to achieve harmony in diversity. The religious pluralism is aimed at some positive implications (Elly & Setiadi, 2011), among others; first, the understanding of religious diversity is a reality that cannot be eliminated. On the other hand, the interdependence between social groups is also a reality that cannot be avoided. Therefore, awareness of the interdependence between groups must be cultivated and maximized. Second, pluralism based on solidarity is essentially upholding the mutual giving and receiving, interdependence, and cooperation to achieve benefits for the nation. Third, religious pluralism requires freedom of religion, which is free from the social-political grip, including the state. Fourth, religious pluralism is not intended to produce partial values but to produce values that contain universal goodness. Departing from this understanding, plural society is understood as it is, which is characterized by the existence of ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity in which there is cooperation with tolerance in facing various challenges to strengthen the social resilience of a nation.

METHODS

This research employs a case study design. In the case study analysis, the main activity of researchers is to find and explore information about the object of research, in this case, the process of social communication in several regions in Indonesia by choosing one area of conflict-related to religion in Indonesia's conflict areas. This research uses a case study method because the description is more complete and comprehensive and has a limitation of the research area, making it easier for researchers to collect data. The case study method can involve individuals, groups, organizations, movements, and events. In line with this, Neuman (2003) has asserted that basically, a case study is a comprehensive description and explanation of various aspects of an individual, a group, an organization (community), an event, or a social situation. Besides, through case studies, certain social situations can be explained in detail. Through this case study method, this research aims to study cases of riots or citizen conflicts related to religion, so as to provide a complete and in-depth picture of the reality under study.

There are two known case study designs, namely a single case design and a double case (multi cases). Each of which has a holistic type (single analysis unit) and is intertwined (multi-unit analysis) (Yin, 2008). Based on the context of this research, the case study method used is a

single case because the research case is one problem; riots related to religions, which have many factors or units to be analyzed (multi-unit analysis), namely the aspects or factors of the riots, the religion.

The object of this research is a case of conflicts in the name of religion in Indonesia, particularly in areas where conflicts occurred; among others are Bekasi district and Ambon districts. The informants of this research are people who have the potential, experience, and knowledge about the main problems of this research, including religious leaders, among others Chairperson of the Religious Harmony Forum (RHF), Secretary-General and Deputy Chairperson of RHF, public figure, leaders of local government including village heads, and conflicting community groups. Data collection techniques employed in this study are observation, interviews, and documentation. Data validation is done by obtaining data from different sources with the same technique. Triangulation of data sources in this research includes religious leaders, community leaders, and journalists who observe directly and know the problem of this research. The data analysis technique used in this research consists of three activities conducted simultaneously, namely data reduction, display or presentation of data, and data verification or conclusion drawing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the findings of research on the social communication process for increasing tolerance and harmonization of social life among religious communities in Indonesia, the process of social communication is directly referred to as traditional and conventional communication. The results of the research from the social communication process can be explained as first is traditional communication. The meaning of the traditional communication process is the delivery of messages from the communicator to the direct communicant that is routinely carried out at all times and continuously with the habits or cultural traditions that they adhere to the local community. Meanwhile, conventional communication is a process of communication that takes place between individuals, groups, organizations, and mass media, which is commonly done by humans in these communication activities. Traditional communication has an important role in people's lives that is including strengthening social relations, harmony, mutual cooperation or cooperation, and mutual assistance in activities that require heavy labor. For example, when an individual in a community group performs *hajatan* (wedding reception in a village, or their house moving activity), communication is used directly with symbols of tradition or habits adopted by a community by inviting them to visit directly at their houses, or communication face to face according to the existing traditions. Traditional communication has emotional and interactive closeness. Social interaction in society is so fluid. Individuals interact with each other, cooperate, get along, and maintain harmony in their lives, mutual empathy between them, as well as in the decision-making process through consensus deliberations by local community leaders.

From traditional aspects of communication's point of view, intertwined with the emotional closeness that has been formed for a long time, interaction is carried out at all times with symbols embraced by the local community through cultural symbols. The traditional media are easily

accepted, relevant to the existing culture, entertaining, using the local language, having elements legitimacy, flexibility, having the ability to repeat the messages it carries, two-way communication, and so on. The traditional media functions as entertainment facilities, educational facilities, social control facilities, means of information dissemination, means of preservation and the development of national cultural values, and a means of adhering to national unity. This research does not discuss traditional media forms that developed in Indonesia, approximately 300 kinds of traditional media forms, one of which is puppets. In the context of this research, it is how traditional communication in social life is able to provide unity even though the community receives provocative messages from irresponsible parties that are aimed at triggering conflicts. This traditional communication is able to break provocative communication even though using traditional or conventional media.

Second is conventional communication. Similar to the conventional communication process, people use mass media such as newspapers, magazines, and television. Even people often receive calls from unknown numbers and sharing provocative messages to trigger conflicts. The community is greatly affected, and this might cause confrontational actions taking a long time and many victims. With the involvement of religious harmony fighters to achieve true peace through peace socialization programs in schools, universities, and community groups, peace can be achieved. It is expected that there would be no conflicts involving citizens of different regions, so that people could live in harmony and peace in a pluralistic society, respect each other, and get along well. The riots that occurred in several regions in Indonesia, such as in Ambon, actually are not religious issues because none of the religions in the world encourages terrible actions. The conflicts are triggered by prophylactic issues from irresponsible people sending random messages through interpersonal communication, calling for violence, invasion, massacre, murder, even in the name of religious war. Over time, the communities realize that they have been influenced by information that is prophetic and unclear. This has harmed them. Supported by intense communication, socialization programs are conducted at all levels of society, schools, and universities in the region. Communication, especially social communication, is an important factor in realizing harmony and peace in society.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the research, it can be concluded that the process of social communication between religious communities takes place dynamically in society. Social communication requires interaction and mutual respect based on social norms and values adopted by the local community. By interacting and mutually respecting the rights of the religious communities, the social life of the communities can be guaranteed to be harmonious, safe, comfortable, tolerant, and harmonious in religious, cultural, ethnic, racial, and ethnic diversity. The harmony is built based on traditional or conventional communication processes that are continuously maintained. Social interaction and socialization programs are foster peace among religious communities.

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