

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION'S ONLINE COMMUNICATION DURING PANDEMIC (A CASE STUDY ON KRAMAT PULO SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE TIME OF COVID-19 OUTBREAK)

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ABSTRACT

Religious organizations are now forced to change their form of communication into online communication because of government policies that urge religious organizations to postpone carrying out religious activities in places of worship in order to reduce the level of transmission of the Covid-19 outbreak. Organizational communication is the process of delivering information and building understanding from individual to individual, or individual to group within an organization. This study raises the issue of online communication as a new form of communication in religious organizations with a focus on knowing the type of online communication used, the flow of online communication of religious organizations, and barriers in online communication. With a qualitative approach used on this research, researchers also used a case study method. Collecting data using in-depth interview and observation techniques. The subject of this research is the administrator of the Kramat Pulo GMAHK organization. The results of the study show that online communication of religious organizations uses asynchronous communication social media such as Facebook, Youtube, and Whatsapp Group as a means of disseminating information, coordinating, and alternative means of religious deepening activities. Meanwhile, synchronous communication media such as Zoom is intended as a substitute for religious activities or worship services, and organizational meetings. The flow of organizational communication online in the process of disseminating information is vertical linear from the leader of the organization to the bottom. Technical barriers, such as internet network problems, are a major problem in online communication of religious organizations.

Keywords: Organizational Communication, Online Communication, Communication Stream, Communication Barriers, Religious Organizations

1. PREFACE

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is so large and has an impact on various aspects of people's lives, starting from the economy to the religious sector. For most Indonesians, religion is something that cannot be abandoned. This statement is evidenced by the results of a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2019 with the results that 96% of Indonesians state that religion has an important role in their lives [1].

As a form of concern, the government launched an Appeal Letter from the Governor of the Special Capital Region of Jakarta Number 5 of 2020 concerning the Temporary Elimination of Worship and Religious Activities in Houses of Worship in Order to Prevent the Spread of the Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19) Outbreak [2]. The Covid-19 pandemic has limited the space for meeting, discussing, and gathering. This certainly has an impact on the sustainability or running of a religious organization. Because basically an organization can run if its members meet each other, and exchange ideas. According to Rasman defines organizational communication as a form of communication that occurs within an organization that involves its management and members [3].

Since the announcement of the policy, various religious organizations have decided to practice online worship. The Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) mentions the word online as an abbreviation of being in a network, or connected through a computer network or the internet and so on. The policy indirectly changes the form of organizational communication into online communication, starting from the liturgy to communication between members, members and administrators, administrators and external parties, as well as other organizational activities that include communication within it.

Organizational communication online is in accordance with the theory of computer-mediated communication. Lee and Oh define computer-mediated communication or Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) as a general term that covers various forms of human communication over computer networks and involves the exchange of text, video, or audio messages, between individuals and individuals, individuals and groups or groups and group [4].

This study was conducted to find out how religious organizations communicate online during a pandemic with a focus on analyzing and knowing the types of online communication used, the flow of organizational communication online, as well as barriers to online communication.

Related Work

E-church as a virtual service communities during covid-19 pandemics

Singarimbun through the theory of computer-mediated communication, found that new media currently play an important role in religious organizations, especially in the Covid-19 pandemic situation [5]. New media become a means of bridging messages between members of religious organizations or become a channel for religious organizations in conveying messages to their members who are limited by space and time. Online media such as YouTube has become an alternative means for religious organizations in carrying out worship activities [5].

In addition, worship activities are also carried out directly using synchronous communication media, which often causes several obstacles such as technical problems, broadcast or network stagnation. Almost a year since religious organizations have implemented online worship activities, now communication between members of religious organizations is taking place in new media which acts as an environment for providing facilities and communication interactions for these religious organizations [5].

Our Contribution

The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of communication science, especially to the study of online communication of religious organizations during a pandemic. Become a reference source for people who are interested in understanding more deeply the types of online communication, the online communication flow of religious organizations and barriers in online communication during a pandemic. Becoming input and information regarding online communication of religious organizations during a pandemic, especially for similar organizations.

Paper Structure

Part 1 is an introduction or introduction to the problems in this research. In part 2, the researcher describes the theory that helps the researcher identify the problems in this research. The research method is discussed in section 3. Section 4 discusses the findings and discussions that have been analyzed and related to the theory that the researcher has chosen to help the researcher. In section 5, the researcher draws conclusions from the research studied, and the reference sources in the last section.

Theoretical Review

Organizational communication

In order for an organization to run, it is necessary to have communication between members or members with organizational management and also fellow organizational administrators which results in an exchange of information, symbols or meanings so that understanding and goals of the organization can be achieved, Katz and Robert Khan define this as organizational communication [6].

a. Organizational communication function

Sendjaja mentions that there are four communication functions in an organization, including the informative function, where through communication, members of the organization can obtain timely information [7]. Regulatory functions, relating to regulations in the organization. The persuasive function where communication is used by organizational leaders to persuade their subordinates to do their work and the integrative function where communication acts as a channel that allows organizational members to work better or provide greater participation in the organization [7].

b. Organizational communication flow

In addition to downward or upward communication, Pace and Faules mention that there are 3 other types of information flow within an organization, including horizontal communication that occurs between individuals with the same or equivalent position or position in the organization. Then, cross-channel communication generally occurs during meetings, for example, when the public relations committee collaborates with the communications department. And lastly, informal communication usually contains jokes, entertainment or things that lead to the personal realm and informal communication can occur between anyone in the organization [8].

c. Organizational communication barriers

According to Ruslan, things that interfere with or hinder the recipient of the message in receiving the message sent by the sender of the message can be defined as communication barriers [9]. Rismayanti mentions that there are four forms of communication barriers, namely technical barriers, physiological barriers, psychological barriers, and semantic barriers [10].

Computer-mediated communication

Nguyen defines computer-mediated communication as a form of communication that includes the process of interaction between humans with the use of tools that can facilitate users in sending information [11].

a. Types of computer-mediated communication

Amin wrote that there are two types of modes used in computer-mediated communication, namely Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication (SCMC) and Asynchronous Computer-Mediated Communication (ACMC) [12].

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach, to explore information about ongoing events, namely online communication of religious organizations during a pandemic by collecting data from the process and meaning based on the perspective of the subject in this study. Crompton mentions qualitative research as research that examines the way individuals understand and interpret their own real and concrete experiences [13].

The case study method in this research was chosen to assist in presenting research that is comprehensive, intense, detailed, in-depth, and the events or phenomena being studied are contemporary or time-bound. To obtain accurate, in-depth and detailed information regarding these problems, the subject of this research is the administrator of the Kramat Pulo Seventh-day Adventist Church organization (GMAHK).

Suharsimi said that the subject in the research is an important element in a study because the variables and things at issue in the research are attached to the person, object or thing that is the subject of the research. [14]. The object of research in this study is the online communication of the GMAHK Kramat Pulo organization during a pandemic. Primary data in this study were collected by in-depth interviews with research subjects. Secondary data in this study were obtained from observations and trusted journals.

Mezmur said that in the data analysis process there are four stages or steps, namely: 1) Familiarization. Before starting the data screening process, researchers need to be familiar with the diversity of the material collected, by re-listening to recordings, studying notes, and rereading transcripts to become familiar with the diversity of perspectives of the subjects and circumstances studied, 2) Data Reduction. At this stage, as the name implies, the researcher will reduce the data or summarize, simplify and summarize the data obtained from field notes. 3) Data Display. In this stage, the presentation of the data that the researcher has prepared will be in the form of a narrative, making it easier for the researcher to understand the problem in depth. 4) Drawing Conclusion. At this stage the researcher will make conclusions on the data that has been collected based on the data collection techniques that the researchers have determined [15].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Religious organization online communication

The Kramat Pulo Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of the oldest Adventist Christian religious organizations in Indonesia, reaching its 100th anniversary on June 23, 2012. Prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, the church service schedule took place on Saturday at 09.00 am for Sabbath School, 11.00 am for Sermon Service, 4.30 pm for Youth Service. And it also takes place on Wednesday at 7:00 pm for the Sunday Prayer Service, and Friday at 7:00 pm for the Vesper Service. Currently, there are 359 registered active members, and it is dominated by members aged 30 years and over.

Despite the good intentions of changing organizational communication to online, organizational members express a lack of emotional closeness and will prefer organizational communication that was usually carried out before the pandemic. Pastor Zai, who serves as the leader in this organization, said that online communication as a new communication in religious organizations during the pandemic was common, but lacked an interactive part

when compared to the previous organizational communication which was carried out offline. According to him, online worship makes members less focused on participating in worship. He saw that in fact, people are no longer focused on worship activities, they may be sleeping or eating, or doing something, so that holiness in worship can no longer be obtained one hundred percent. Michael Sihombing, one of the informants in this study who serves as Deputy Chair of the Department of Community Services, responded that the message to be conveyed through online communication might be conveyed but would not be able to replace the emotional feelings obtained during offline activities. He said that if he could choose, he would choose offline worship at any time.

The results of the observations that the researchers found support the statements of the sources. In every religious ritual activity held every week, it was found that the number of members who attended was an average of 128 people, which is only half of the number of active registered members of 359 people. This data was obtained from the Secretary of the Kramat Pulo Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Aurora Marbun

This is similar to what Singarimbun stated in his research journal which also discussed E-Church as a form of virtual service during the pandemic that viewers of worship activities broadcast on certain social media did not feel emotional closeness to the message conveyed by the priest or speaker [5].

In the online communication of religious organizations, the function that applies is the informative function. Apart from being able to help its members obtain timely information, Sendjaja said that communication within the organization is important because communication within the organization resembles an information exchange process that will result in members being able to carry out their respective activities more optimally and with certainty. [7].

Organizational communication conducted online is considered to provide convenience to contact members of the organization who are being hit by a disaster, or to facilitate the dissemination of information to members of the organization. In addition, online organizational communication is considered to help maintain affective closeness between members during the pandemic, because access to meeting spaces is limited.

b. Computer-mediated communication in religious organizational communication during a pandemic

Organizational communication has moved into online communication since the policy was issued to temporarily eliminate religious activities and services at places of worship. Susanto, in his research states that many users really like the use of social media because social media is essentially considered to have the ability to provide satisfaction to users where users feel free and flexible in carrying out various forms of interaction that are not hindered by distance or time [16]. The use of social media such as Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, or Whatsapp is included in the asynchronous communication category.

This is because Asynchronous Computer-Mediated Communication is a delayed online communication and participant communication is not synchronous using a computer. The advantage of asynchronous communication tools is that they are available anytime and anywhere. This type of communication is very useful for online organizational activities with a large number of members, because organizational members can access this

asynchronous communication tool 24/7 and also as a place of information that can be accessed at any time.

Pastor Zai explained the use of asynchronous communication social media during the pandemic in the Kramat Pulo Seventh-day Adventist Church organization. He explained that each of the asynchronous communication social media used had their respective functions, including Whatsapp Groups to facilitate the dissemination of information. Whatsapp groups are used as a medium of communication. Information such as news of condolences, births, birthdays, wedding invitations, worship schedules and the like are shared in the group. He explained that each department in the organizational structure has its own Whatsapp Group. Youtube and Facebook as alternative means for religious study activities, especially for those who are unable to participate in worship activities carried out using the Zoom video conferencing application. These Youtube videos were made to support Bible learning because since the pandemic there have been no more face-to-face Bible studies or Sabbath school discussions. With Facebook, there are also people who may be sick at the time or when there is an unavoidable obstacle, if members of the organization still yearn to worship, they can re-watch what has been done. Observation results show the use of social media Youtube which uploads three videos a week, use of Facebook and groups in the Whatsapp application consisting of congregation groups, assemblies, youth, and others.

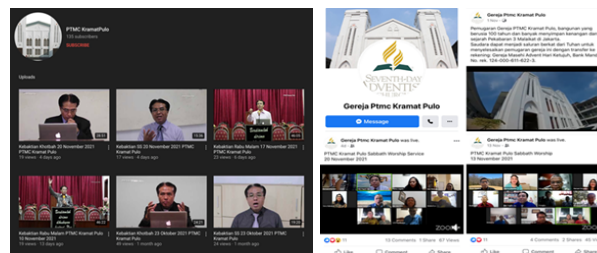


Figure 1

The utilization of asynchronous media, youtube and facebook

Social media such as Zoom can be categorized into synchronous online media. Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication is communication that is carried out directly (online) simultaneously at the same time using a computer.

Piet Simanungkalit as one of the resource persons in this study who serves as the Head of the Communications Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Kramat Pulo mentioned the use of synchronous communication social media in organizational activities. The media in question is the Zoom video conferencing application, which is used as a substitute for religious learning, but resource person 1 said this application tends to be wasteful and eats up internet quota quickly.

He explained that this application was not only used as a substitute for religious ritual activities, but also became a means for organizational meetings. He added that this application is relatively easy to access and use, according to him, almost all members of the organization have Zoom. In addition, he also explained that the Zoom application is often used interchangeably by organizational youth classes after the end of online religious ritual activities. So, the main activity using Zoom is the sermon service, every

Saturday at nine thirty it starts until twelve in the afternoon. Then continued in the afternoon used for activities for children's or youth classes such as Pathfinder and Adventurer, and in the afternoon-youth services around half past four or four. So there's the church's official Zoom. if there is an assembly meeting, sometimes there are things that need to be discussed that are important, urgent, usually Zoom is used on days outside Saturday. Zoom is user friendly, easy to use and indeed many are using it.

Observation results show that there is a use of Zoom media every time with the aim of being a substitute for religious rituals and organizational meetings. Lim said, the advantage of using synchronous computer-mediated communication is that individuals are facilitated in real-time or in-person collaboration as in traditional classrooms [17]. Organizational members can interact with each other spontaneously and participants immediately get feedback from one another. Weaknesses that often arise in using synchronous communication are technical and connection failures.

c. Religious organizational communication flow

Religious organizations as organizations that do not take advantage, religious organizations have a different form of communication flow from organizations in general. In the structure of religious organizations, the highest position is occupied by leaders of religious organizations, or in this study referred to as church pastors.



Figure 2

Organizational structure of the kramat pulo seventh-day adventist church

The results of the study show that in online organizational communication, the flow of communication generally comes from the top and goes down. The flow of communication in religious organizations that comes from top to bottom is not without reason, but to prevent confusing information, or teachings that are not in accordance with the teachings of the religious organization, and to maintain order in the organization. The flow of communication comes from above or from the leader to the bottom because the leader is believed to have the credibility and authority to lead the members of the organization.

Pastor Zai revealed that in the religious organization of the Kramat Pulo Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the priest has the highest right in the process of disseminating information, especially online, this is intended so that the information spread within the organization is not confusing. He also explained that as a leader, he did not work alone but was assisted by the communications department whose task was to disseminate information which was first checked and confirmed by the church pastor. The one who has the right to provide information so that there is no confusion, is the priest. This organization has taken a policy and decision that information comes from one door only, namely from the communications department which has discussed with the pastor

beforehand. Based on that, people should not arbitrarily convey information in groups, especially those called church groups, because everything has their own procedures.

There is also a bottom-up flow of communication. In religious organizations, members of the organization have the right to communicate to the organization's management, either by submitting criticism, suggestions, or requests for prayer, as well as requests related to other matters. Meanwhile, horizontal communication that occurs in religious organizations usually occurs during meetings, for example, an assembly meeting which is only attended by the elders of the congregation. This communication occurs between individuals who have the same position or position even though they are in different departments or units.

In addition, cross-channel communication occurs when organizational members cross functional lines to communicate with people from other units. For example, the management of the community service department with the management of the youth department and others to convey information or discuss matters concerning both parties, and other reasons.

In religious organizations, there is also a flow of informal communication or communication that moves in the personal realm. This communication occurs when members of the organization communicate with each other regardless of their position in the organization and discuss personal information.

d. Organizational Communication Barriers

Since organizational communication has moved to online, the barriers that arise in organizational communication are increasingly diverse. One of the things in communication that is difficult to avoid is ineffective communication, where this usually happens because there are things that directly or indirectly interfere with or hinder the process of effective communication. Effendy interprets this as a communication barrier [18].

In online communication, the obstacles that are often encountered are not far from technical barriers. Among other things, lack of internet quota, poor network, quality of technological devices that are no longer sophisticated, and other problems related to technicalities. Rismayanti explains technical barriers as barriers from a technological perspective, where there are limited facilities and communication equipment [10]. He also mentioned that the lack of necessary facilities or infrastructure could be called a technical obstacle. Likewise with the lack of individual skills in mastering technological equipment.

Pastor Zai said network disruptions, quota capabilities, or lack of expertise in using technological devices were the biggest obstacles in the online communication process of the Kramat Pulo Seventh-day Adventist Church organization. For example, when using PowerPoint, for sharescreen, obstacles often arise because not everyone is accustomed to using technology tools. So, when suddenly offered, this is quite disturbing at the time of worship. In addition, storing or echoing sound also often occurs because of the simultaneous use of using two or three gadgets, and people who are in a state of shock do not know how to handle it.

Michael Sihombing said that the quality of telephone equipment, network, or quota is a technical obstacle that often occurs. He said that the quality of the device is very influential, for example there are people whose cellphones are old, the RAM is still 1GB, the more groups they have on their cellphone, the easier it will be to heat and lag.

Online communication is also inseparable from the use of text. Barriers that arise from the process of misinterpreting the language or messages it receives, causing miscommunication are referred to as semantic barriers. The definition of semantics is the study of ideas on understanding, which are expressed through language. Rismayanti explained that semantic barriers can be interpreted as disturbances in the process of conveying a wrong understanding or interpretation [10].

Pastor Zai explained that the difference in meaning often occurs due to the use of unfamiliar terms, especially since text is considered as multiple interpretations which can change its meaning due to punctuation errors. The text as a multi-interpretation, is often misunderstood, maybe the emphasis is wrong because of the wrong punctuation. Especially if the person does not understand the language used by the other person. There are people who may be so used to theological language, or high difficulty language, while there are people who cannot accept unfamiliar terms.

Piet Simanungkalit when asked, shared his experience regarding the miscommunication that occurred between him and a member of the organization. Differences in perspective that trigger miscommunication between them. At that time there was a woman who shared about Jokowi in the Church Info group. And he reprimanded the woman personally, he also made sure the language used was polite and courteous. He told her good afternoon ma'am, explained to her it's forbidden to post political things in church groups. He even took a screenshot and sent it to the Pastor that he had warned the woman about what she did. However, the message was answered by the woman telling him that he's acting like a know-it-all, arrogant guy and threat him by saying that she knew his parents and will take it seriously. He was scolded back by the woman.

Meanwhile, Michael Sihombing said that semantic barriers often occur and cause miscommunication in the organization's online communication process due to the diverse backgrounds of members of the Kramat Pulo Seventh-day Adventist religious organization. The church members consist of intellectuals, there are those who study up to high school, some also go to ordinary schools, so they are very diverse. There is a saying that says, different fields different grasshoppers, therefore in order to avoid semantic barriers we must understand the field. If the field is for elementary school children, don't use college language, elementary school children will be confused, so you must use the simplest possible words.

To avoid the occurrence of semantic barriers or miscommunication that resembles this, communicators need to pay attention to the character of the communicant and see the possibility of the communicant in interpreting the message he receives so that communicators can avoid miscommunication.

Limitations of a person's senses, as well as differences in perception or emotion, background, culture, and stereotypes can result in obstacles in organizational communication, especially online. Emeilia and Muntazah mention in their research that

barriers can occur when people who communicate do not use the same language or at least the same language skills [18]. The differences that exist between communicators and communicants can trigger obstacles in organizational communication online.

Pastor Zai mentioned that the obstacles caused by physiological aspects are real, and in dealing with this he emphasized that good communication skills are needed to be able to adjust. One example is a member of an organization who has hearing problems. The tone used in speaking should be larger. Not only speaking, but assisted with text if there is a hearing impairment.

Piet Simanungkalit as the second resource person told his experience regarding miscommunication caused by physiological barriers in the online organizational communication process. There was a father who was a member of the organization, he happened to have a stroke, so because of a stroke his hand became stiff. So there are often typos, punctuation marks and sentences become messy and irregular. One time, suddenly he was chatting and behind him he typed the word "pig". The people in the group protested what the father's sentence meant. Since they were both senior members, Piet felt he couldn't intervene, so he called the pastor and the pastor then intervened. Things like this are difficult to avoid because these obstacles are caused by things that are innate to the person. To overcome this, good communication skills are needed and are open to differences.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Online communication of religious organizations includes religious rituals or worship activities, communication between members, members and administrators, administrators and external parties, as well as other organizational activities that include communication within them. Online communication of religious organizations uses asynchronous communication social media such as Facebook, Youtube, and Whatsapp Group because they are considered to be a means for information dissemination, coordination, and alternative means of religious deepening activities. Meanwhile, synchronous communication media such as Zoom is intended as a substitute for religious activities or worship services, and organizational meetings.

The flow of communication in online religious organizations takes various forms. In the process of disseminating information within religious organizations, the flow of communication comes from the top down. With the aim, the information spread in the organization is not confusing. or teachings that are not in accordance with the teachings of the religious organization, and so that order in the organization is maintained. The flow of communication from the bottom up in religious organizations is useful for communicating to the organization's management, whether to convey criticism, suggestions, or requests for prayer, as well as other requests. Horizontal communication in religious organizations occurs at organizational meetings. Cross-channel communication occurs when organizational members communicate with people from other units. And this informal communication flow occurs when members of the organization communicate and discuss personal information.

In online communication, there are various obstacles, including technical barriers, semantic barriers and physiological barriers. However, technical barriers are the most common obstacles.

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