

A Study Was Conducted With the Aim of Gaining Insight into the Transformation of Religious Communication Knowledge among Buddhist Religious Counsellors in Bandar Lampung



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ABSTRACT: This research discusses the transformation of religious communication knowledge among Buddhist religious instructors in Bandar Lampung. This transformation is important because of the challenges faced by the counsellors in responding to the increasingly complex spiritual needs of the community. Against the backdrop of the socio-cultural and educational diversity of the congregation, this research explores how Buddhist religious counsellors adapt their communication methods and how this knowledge is developed and applied in the local context. Through a qualitative approach, the research reveals the dynamics of religious communication and its contribution to the spiritual development of Buddhists in the region.

KEYWORDS: Knowledge transformation, Religious communication, Buddhist counsellor

I. INTRODUCTION

Human resources are a very valuable factor, so the government is responsible for maintaining the quality of life, work, and fostering the workforce so that they are willing to contribute optimally to achieve goals. Performance is a comparison of performance carried out by employees to achieve predetermined standards so that the results achieved by a person, both quality and quantity are as expected and can be accounted for (Tanjung et al. 2019).

Religious communication has an important role in conveying religious teachings and values to people. For Buddhist religious educators in Bandar Lampung City, religious communication knowledge is not only a tool to convey messages, but also a foundation in fostering deeper relationships with the communities they serve. The transformation of religious communication knowledge among Buddhist religious instructors is a relevant issue, given the challenges and dynamics that continue to develop in society. Communication is one of the most important activities in human life. Humans in life always interact and communicate because humans are social creatures who cannot live alone and must interact with other people (Rosdialena et al. 2021).

In this digital era, the method of delivering religious messages has changed significantly. Religious educators are required to master various forms of communication media, both traditional and modern, in order to reach a wider and more diverse audience. However, this transformation is not only related to technology; it also includes a deeper understanding of how religious messages can be delivered in ways that are relevant and meaningful to different groups of people. The competencies needed by extension workers in utilising ICT relate to basic skills that include computer operation, application software, internet utilisation and website creation. In extension activities, ICT is not only utilised as the use of media, but in the use of all equipment that can store or obtain information to support extension activities in the community. For example, extension workers can recap data using Microsoft Word on a computer or laptop, send data by Email, save files to Google drive, and communicate online with WhatsApp or other social media. (Pundarika and heriyanto 2023).

In Bandar Lampung City, Buddhist religious educators face challenges in responding to the increasingly complex spiritual needs of the community. The diversity of people's social, cultural and educational backgrounds is a factor that affects the effectiveness of religious communication. Therefore, the transformation of religious communication knowledge among religious educators is crucial to ensure that Buddhist messages are well received and have a positive impact in the lives of the community.

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In (Sugandi et al. 2019) revealed that using active learning methods and direct interaction, the counsellors can help Buddhists internalise the teachings and apply them in daily life.

This empirical study aims to reveal the knowledge transformation process of religious communication among Buddhist religious extension workers in Bandar Lampung. The research will explore how the counsellors adapt their communication methods in the face of challenges, as well as how the knowledge is developed and applied in the local context. Thus, this research is expected to provide deeper insights into the dynamics of religious communication and its contribution to the spiritual development of Buddhists in Bandar Lampung.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework in this study discusses the concept of knowledge transformation in religious communication among Buddhist religious counsellors. This transformation is an important process to address the challenges faced by counsellors in responding to the increasingly complex spiritual needs of the faithful. The theory used in this study includes several key concepts:

1. Religious Communication

Religious communication is an important tool in conveying religious teachings and fostering deeper relationships with devotees. In the context of Buddhist religious counsellors in Bandar Lampung, religious communication serves not only as a medium for delivering messages, but also as a foundation in fostering spiritual relationships. Etymologically, communication comes from the Latin *communis* which means the same. So, communication will be able to take place if between people involved in communication there is something in common about something that is communicated (Effendi 2002: 3). There are several diverse definitions of communication and each has a different meaning, scope and meaning. There are three kinds of views on communication including; first communication can be said to be a symbolic activity, because communication uses meaningful symbols that are converted into words or not verbal words (non-verbal). These communication symbols can take the form of human actions and activities, or the appearance of objects that have certain meanings. The meaning here is the perceptions, thoughts, and feelings that a person experiences, which in turn are communicated to others. Second, communication can be said to be a process because it is a dynamic activity, this activity takes place continuously so that it continues to change. Third, communication is said to be an exchange of meaning, because it is an activity of sending or receiving messages. Meaning is not just verbal words or non-verbal behaviour, but meaning is a message that is intended by the sender and is expected to be understood by the recipient (Liliweri 2002: 6).

The word Spiritual means spiritual or something related to the spirit or mind. Spirituality is a gift of God given to humans who are in the heart. In the Buddhist *Pancasila* itself, there is the 3rd precept, namely *musavadda veramani sikkhapada sammadiyami*, which means I try to train myself to avoid speaking untruths/lies. The inner voice is the key to spirituality as it is the emanation of the attributes of God. These attributes are a reflection within a person to act and speak well.

Thus, religious communication can be synthesised, namely communication that occurs between humans and God or it can also be understood that religious communication is related to religion, meaning communication based on religious nuances. While religious, the basic word of religion is religion which comes from the foreign language religion as a word form of a noun which means religion.

2. Knowledge Transformation

Knowledge transformation in religious communication relates to the adaptation of communication methods and strategies to respond to the social, cultural and educational diversity of the community. Buddhist religious educators need to develop their ability to convey the Buddhist message through various methods, both in person and by utilising information technology. The quality of Buddhist religious instructors, religious instructors who have good personal qualities are able to provide services to the community well so that the community can benefit from what the religious instructors deliver. Religious instructors who have good personal qualities are easily accepted by the congregation, in addition to providing material or lectures, the congregation sees religious instructors from the way they think, speak, act and socialise (Krisnanda 2006).

3. The Role of Education and Training

Continuing education and structured training are key to knowledge transformation. Extension workers should be given access to programmes that improve their understanding of Buddhism as well as their communication skills. Coaching Buddhist extension workers so that they can perform their duties well is an essential step to ensure the effectiveness of counselling in the field. This involves intensive training in Buddhist teachings, communication techniques, and effective counselling strategies. It also includes the development of interpersonal and conflict management skills, so that counsellors can interact with different community

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groups harmoniously. This can be realised if there is a willingness from citizens, especially religious believers, to live and practice their respective religious teachings deeply, to be mature, tolerant, and pluralistic, then peace will be realised (Gautama et al. 2023).

4. Utilisation of Technology

Information technology plays an important role in expanding the scope of spiritual formation. Buddhist religious instructors in Bandar Lampung utilise platforms such as e-learning and mobile applications to deliver learning materials and communicate with devotees. These applications help the counsellors so much that they can still carry out their duties during these difficult times (Jaya and Suhardi 2022).

Using these theories, this research explores how Buddhist extension workers can adapt their communication methods to suit the local context and challenges.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative research approach with a communication science paradigm designed to empirically examine the differences between the concept and implementation of Religious Communication Knowledge Formation of Buddhist religious instructors in Bandar Lampung City using qualitative research types. According to (Sugiyono 2019:4) qualitative research is a research strategy that produces data or information that can describe social realities and social events in people's lives.

IV. DISCUSSION

Improving the quality of Buddhist counsellors is a crucial step to ensuring that religious messages can be delivered effectively and touch people's hearts. Continuing education and training is key to achieving this. Extension workers should be given access to training programmes designed to deepen their understanding of Buddhism as well as improve their communication skills. Structured and continuous training will help counsellors to keep up-to-date with the latest developments in the religious and social fields.

Certification and accreditation are important steps in improving the quality of counsellors. By implementing a certification system, Buddhist extension workers will have clear and recognised qualification standards. This certification can also be a quality indicator for the community, so that they can have more confidence in the counsellors they meet. Accreditation from a recognised body will also give formal recognition to the competence of the extension workers.

The development of a training curriculum should include important aspects of Buddhism, communication techniques, and the psychology of religion, as well as an understanding of the social and cultural context of the community being served. A comprehensive curriculum will ensure that counsellors have the breadth and depth of knowledge necessary to effectively communicate Buddhism. The curriculum should also be flexible to be customised to the specific needs of the counsellor.

The utilisation of information technology in the training of Buddhist extension workers can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning process. E-learning platforms and mobile applications can be used to provide training materials that are easily accessible anytime and anywhere. The communication strategy used by the trainers is to utilise the applications available on smartphones, including WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. With the existence of these various applications, extension workers are greatly helped by the existence of these applications so that they can still carry out their duties in the midst of difficult times like today (Jaya and Suhardi 2022). This technology also allows interaction and discussion between extension workers and instructors, as well as between extension workers themselves, so that learning becomes more dynamic and interactive.

Communication skills are a key element for Buddhist counsellors. Therefore, training in public speaking, preparation of lecture materials, and techniques for interacting with audiences should be an integral part of the training programme. Being able to communicate well is one form of social skill that fosters self-confidence (Fathoni et al. 2021) (Yunan et al. 2022). Effective communication is very important in communicating because it can help a person's success in interacting. Extension workers who have good communication skills will be better able to convey religious messages clearly and interestingly, and be able to answer questions and overcome challenges that arise in the extension process. A good way to communicate is by paying attention to speech, paying attention to body language and intonation, listening well, being open, providing support, not only focusing on yourself, giving advice only when asked, controlling emotions, inserting humour and being generous (Sari et al., 2019). Regarding the communication skills that must be possessed by an extension worker, such as public speaking ability, it was also conveyed by Mr Virya Parama Siauwinata Bodhi, SE on the 10th of April 2024 at 21.10 pm as shown in the following interview;

'Mastery of public speaking is very important for a religious instructor because our main task is to convey religious messages to the community. Good public speaking allows us to convey religious teachings clearly, effectively, and interestingly, so that the

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messages delivered can be well understood by the audience. There are several benefits that I feel. Firstly, effective communication increases the community's credibility and trust in religious educators. Second, the ability to speak in public helps overcome various situations, such as lectures in front of many people or discussions with small groups. Third, with good public speaking, we can more easily attract the attention of the audience and make them more interested in listening to and practicing the teachings we convey.'

Improving the welfare of Buddhist extension workers is an important step to ensure that they can perform their duties optimally and with dedication. Recognising and rewarding their contributions is one effective way to improve their welfare. The Buddha preached in Majjima Nikaya, I, 68 that happiness derived from the fruits of one's own labour (atthi-sukha) and usable wealth (bhoga-sukha) are not enough; true happiness is enjoyed when there is no debt (anana-sukha) and no misconduct (anavajja-sukha) (Bawono et al. 2023). Formal recognition, such as certificates of appreciation and public acknowledgement, can provide additional motivation for extension workers to continue to strive for excellence in their duties.

In Buddhism, one of the eightfold noble paths (Hasta Ariya Magga) is right livelihood (samma ajiva). Right livelihood conceptualises a profession that provides profit but does not harm others, for example choosing a profession that does not involve the trade of humans, animals, weapons, poisons, and so on. Instead, choose professions that are beneficial to society such as doctors, food vendors, farmers and others. In addition, choosing a livelihood is influential in advancing human life. The concept of samma ajiva can be used as a guideline for Buddhists in choosing a profession so that they can have a positive job and can advance their welfare (Purnomo and Sukma 2020).

V. CONCLUSIONS

This research reveals that the transformation of religious communication knowledge among Buddhist religious instructors in Bandar Lampung is very important in responding to communication challenges that arise due to the diversity of social, cultural and educational backgrounds of the congregation. Buddhist religious educators need to adapt their communication methods so that the messages of Buddhism can be well received and effective. This research emphasises the importance of continuing education, training and certification to improve the competence of extension workers. The use of information technology was also identified as a significant tool in broadening and deepening the Buddhist spiritual formation process in the region.

With a more structured knowledge transformation, Buddhist extension workers are expected to make a greater contribution to the spiritual development and well-being of Buddhists in Bandar Lampung.

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