

Patterns of Islamic Communication in A Multicultural Society in Purwokerto, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to describe the pattern of Islamic communication in a multicultural society in Purwokerto. As a city with ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, Purwokerto presents challenges as well as opportunities for the development of inclusive Islamic communication. A qualitative approach with phenomenological methods is used to understand the deep meaning behind communication practices applied by religious leaders, worshippers, and interfaith communities. The results of the study show that the pattern of Islamic communication in Purwokerto is integrative and participatory, combining a formal approach through lectures and recitations with informal patterns in daily interactions. Values such as tabayyun, husnudzon, and consensus deliberation are the basic principles in reducing the potential for social conflict. The digital era has also affected the transformation of da'wah communication patterns, as seen from the use of social media, podcasts, and WhatsApp groups that facilitate the spread of religious messages. Challenges still arise, especially related to religious hoaxes, group exclusivity, and low digital literacy of the community. This research emphasizes the importance of synergy between religious leaders, society, and the government to maintain social harmony. It is hoped that an adaptive, dialogical, and humanist Islamic communication pattern can be a bridge of tolerance in the multicultural society of Purwokerto.

KEYWORDS: Islamic communication patterns, multicultural society, digital da'wah, tolerance.

I. INTRODUCTION

Purwokerto, as an administrative city as well as an educational center in Banyumas Regency, has quite complex social dynamics. The ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity in this city forms a reality of a multicultural society that demands an inclusive and adaptive communication pattern. The community in Purwokerto not only consists of the Javanese tribe as the majority, but also Sundanese, Batak, Minang, Chinese, as well as immigrant communities from various other regions which makes this city a kind of cultural melting pot (Fauzi, 2020).

Along with population growth and rapid urbanization, interactions between groups are increasingly intense. In this context, Islamic communication patterns play an important role as a medium for conveying religious messages that not only emphasize the ritual aspect, but also the social aspect of society. The Islamic communication pattern applied in Purwokerto shows various characteristics, ranging from formal communication patterns through lectures, sermons, to informal communication patterns in daily interactions in RT/RW environments and community organizations (Santosa, 2021).

The phenomenon of multiculturalism in Purwokerto encourages Muslims to adapt their communication patterns to heterogeneous social situations. Data from the Central Statistics Agency of Banyumas Regency noted that the population of Purwokerto in 2023 reached around 270,000 people, with a religious composition dominated by Islam at around 91%, Christianity 5%, Catholics 2%, Hindus 0.5% and Buddhists 0.5% (BPS Banyumas, 2023). Even though the majority is Muslim, the presence of minority groups remains an important element that must be considered in establishing communication so as not to cause social friction.

In a multicultural society, Islamic communication is expected to be able to be a bridge to strengthen harmony between religious communities. This is in line with the role of Islamic da'wah which not only focuses on the dissemination of religious teachings, but also promotes the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and intercultural dialogue. As expressed by Sugihartati (2018), the pattern of da'wah communication in multicultural urban societies requires a humanist approach that prioritizes dialogue and openness.

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In Purwokerto, the practice of Islamic communication can be seen in cross-neighborhood recitation activities, discussion forums between Islamic organizations, and digital da'wah activities that are increasingly developing. For example, several large mosques in Purwokerto such as the General Soedirman Mosque, the Great Mosque of Baitussalam, and the Al-Ittihad Mosque became centers of da'wah activities attended by worshippers from diverse social backgrounds. In this forum, dai or preachers are faced with the challenge of how to convey religious messages without offending the beliefs of other parties (Nasution, 2019).

In addition, the digital era has also influenced the pattern of Islamic communication in Purwokerto. The emergence of RT/RW WhatsApp groups, da'wah communities on social media, and Islamic studies podcasts reflect a transformation in the way of communication. Religious information can be accessed faster and more widely, but it also has the potential to spark misunderstandings if not managed wisely. Pramono's research (2022) emphasizes that da'wah communication through digital media requires precision in the choice of words, context, and audience so as not to trigger conflicts in a multicultural society.

The existence of Islamic community organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and local recitation groups also provides color in the pattern of Islamic communication in Purwokerto. Each organization has distinctive communication characteristics, both in da'wah methods, language styles, and approaches to their congregations. NU, for example, with its cultural approach, emphasizes the strengthening of local traditions such as tahlilan, yasinan, and shalawatan which indirectly strengthen social ties between residents. Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah prioritizes formal recitation, education, and social activities with a rational approach (Sugihartati, 2018).

At the grassroots level, interpersonal communication patterns between Muslims and non-Muslims also play a significant role. Daily interactions in the residential environment, markets, schools, and workplaces reflect how Islamic values are practiced through tolerance, mutual respect, and mutual cooperation. This kind of communication pattern is an important foundation for the creation of social cohesion in the midst of existing differences (Fauzi, 2020).

However, challenges remain. Differences in the interpretation of religious teachings, radicalism, and hoax news circulating through social media can disrupt the harmony of society. Several cases of horizontal conflicts in other areas are important lessons for Purwokerto to always prioritize soothing and inclusive communication. In this context, the role of religious leaders, educators, and local media is very strategic as guardians of the value of religious moderation (Nasution, 2019).

In addition to the internal factors of Muslims, the influence of globalization also affects communication patterns. The entry of foreign culture through technology, entertainment media, and lifestyle trends has given rise to new communication styles that are often not in line with local values. This requires adaptability so that Islamic da'wah remains relevant in the midst of a dynamic multicultural society (Pramono, 2022). From an academic perspective, research on Islamic communication patterns in the multicultural community of Purwokerto is still relatively limited. Most studies focus more on the aspect of da'wah in general but have not specifically explored the pattern of cross-cultural communication in social spaces. In fact, this kind of research is important to formulate communication strategies that are right on target and have a positive impact on improving social harmony (Santosa, 2021). The urgency of this research is getting stronger considering the increasingly open space for interfaith discussion in Purwokerto. The Banyumas Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB), for example, routinely holds interfaith dialogues as a forum for exchanging ideas and reducing potential conflicts. In this kind of forum, an Islamic communication pattern that prioritizes persuasiveness, politeness, and openness is needed (Sugihartati, 2018).

In the field, some concrete examples of Islamic communication patterns that have succeeded in reducing the potential for social conflict are the practice of citizen deliberation in solving problems, interfaith social service activities, and public recitation involving inter-tribal figures. This shows that the Islamic communication pattern is not only dogmatic, but also pragmatic, adapting to the needs of the local community. In addition to formal forums, local mass media also have a strategic role in supporting Islamic communication patterns that are conducive to multicultural societies. Media such as Radio Suara Muhammadiyah, mosque bulletins, and local online news portals often publish da'wah content that raises issues of tolerance, togetherness, and harmony. According to Pramono (2022), the existence of local da'wah media can expand the reach of Islamic messages while minimizing the spread of provocative content that is prone to causing conflict.

Interestingly, the young generation in Purwokerto has also begun to use digital media to preach in creative ways, such as through Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube content. Short content with the theme of da'wah is often packed with slang, memes, and background music that young people like. This approach shows a shift in Islamic communication patterns from traditional models to interactive digital models (Santosa, 2021). Even so, this dynamic still requires caution. Digital literacy is the key so that da'wah messages are not misinterpreted or manipulated by irresponsible parties. In a multicultural context, Islamic communication in the digital space must pay attention to the diversity of audiences so as not to cause sectarian bias (Pramono, 2022).

Along the way, the pattern of Islamic communication in Purwokerto has gone through various adjustments according to the times. In the New Order era, for example, communication patterns tended to be top-down through mosque pulpits and formal

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lectures. Meanwhile, now, the communication pattern is more horizontal, participatory, and utilizes digital technology. This change is a response to the demands of an increasingly open, critical, and diverse society (Fauzi, 2020). Based on this description, it is hoped that a formula for Islamic communication patterns in a multicultural society in Purwokerto will be found.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This systematic review employed a mixed-methods approach to synthesize both quantitative and qualitative evidence regarding blended learning effectiveness in secondary education. The methodological framework was structured according to the PRISMA guidelines for systematic reviews (Page et al., 2021), supplemented by the methodological guidance for mixed-methods reviews provided by the Joanna Briggs Institute (Lizarondo et al., 2017). This approach enabled the integration of diverse forms of evidence to develop a comprehensive understanding of both implementation processes and outcomes related to blended learning in secondary education contexts.

This study uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological methods, because the research aims to understand the deep meaning behind the pattern of Islamic communication that develops in a multicultural society in Purwokerto (Creswell, 2018). This approach is considered relevant to explore the subjective experiences of communicators, ranging from religious leaders, worshippers, to cross-cultural and religious communities involved in daily interactions (Sugiyono, 2019). The selection of locations was carried out purposively in several areas in Purwokerto that have high cultural heterogeneity, such as Kober, Kedungwuluh, and Bancarkembar Villages. This location was chosen because it represents the diverse social conditions of urban communities, so that the patterns of Islamic communication that emerge can be observed contextually (Prabowo, 2020).

The subject of the study was determined by purposive sampling, which is to select informants who are considered capable of providing in-depth information. The informants consist of mosque imams, administrators of the taklim council, community leaders, and residents who are actively involved in religious activities in a multicultural environment (Nasution, 2021). The number of informants is determined based on the principle of data saturation, which is that the data mining process is stopped if the information obtained has been repeated and nothing new has emerged (Moleong, 2021).

Data collection techniques used in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies. In-depth interviews are conducted with semi-structured guidelines so that informants can express their experiences freely and naturally (Kriyantono, 2020). Participatory observation was carried out with researchers directly involved in religious activities to observe Islamic communication practices in pluralistic social spaces (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The documentation supports data from interviews and observations, for example through sermon recordings, records of da'wah activities, and archives of RT/RW meetings related to religious interactions. The collected data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2019). The analysis was carried out thematically to find the dominant communication patterns and the factors that influence them in the multicultural society. The validity of the data is maintained by triangulating techniques and sources so that the research results are credible and accountable (Sugiyono, 2019).

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Purwokerto as a developing city in Central Java has a multicultural community dynamic. The diversity of ethnicities, religions, races, and between groups is reflected in the daily lives of Purwokerto residents. In this context, Islamic communication plays an important role as a bridge in building social harmony and maintaining harmony in the midst of differences. As conveyed by a religious leader in Berkoh Village, South Purwokerto. "If we talk about Islamic communication in Purwokerto, it is unique, because we interact with many backgrounds. So communication must be wise, polite, and respectful of differences." (Interview, KH. Ahmad Suhada, 2025).

The statement emphasized that Islamic communication is not only limited to religious rituals, but also includes social interactions based on moral values. This concept is in line with the Communicative Action Theory (Habermas) which emphasizes the importance of rational, honest, and mutually understanding communicative actions to reach consensus (Yusuf, 2019). In the context of a multicultural society, Islamic communication in Purwokerto is a means of social transformation that supports the creation of openness and tolerance.

1. Islamic Communication Patterns: Integrative and Participatory

In the results of field observations and in-depth interviews, the pattern of Islamic communication in Purwokerto can be categorized into integrative and participatory patterns. The integrative pattern can be seen from the efforts of religious leaders, mosque administrators, and recitation groups who are active in establishing interfaith communication. One of the mosque teenagers in North Purwokerto District said: "We often hold social services, blood donations, or community service with non-Muslim residents. That's how we build a good relationship." (Interview, Fathur Rohman, 2025).

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This pattern supports social integration by making mosques not only a center of worship, but also a center for community empowerment. Islamic communication values such as *tabayyun* (clarification) and *husnudzon* (prejudice) are internalized in every interaction. This is evident when there are sensitive issues, residents prefer deliberative dialogue rather than open confrontation. On the other hand, participatory communication patterns appear in study forums, *taklim* assemblies, and *da'wah*-based social media groups. Religious information is disseminated in a dialogical way. The administrator of the *taklim* assembly in Karanglesem explained, "We always involve all members to express their opinions. So it's not just the *ustadz* who speaks. Two-way discussions are more acceptable". (Interview, Hj. Siti Mulyati, 2025). This is in line with the Theory of Dialogical Communication (Freire) which emphasizes communication as a process of liberation through critical dialogue and active participation (Rahmawati, 2021). The dialogical approach makes members of the community feel valued and motivated to practice Islamic values in multicultural life.

2. The Principles of Openness and Empathy

In its implementation, the pattern of Islamic communication in Purwokerto emphasizes the principle of openness. Several administrators of the campus *da'wah* institution (LDK) at Jenderal Soedirman University (Unsoed) developed a cross-faith discussion program. "This interfaith discussion makes us learn to understand each other. We don't impose teachings, but share perspectives in a polite way." (Interview, Aisyah Fadilah, 2025) Openness is the key to building mutual trust among religious communities. This concept is closely related to the value of friendship which is the spirit of Islamic communication. Gathering activities are not just rituals, but a tangible form of communication that prioritizes empathy and social solidarity (Susanto, 2019). According to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, individuals use communication media to meet cognitive and affective needs (Kusuma, 2020). This is relevant to the rise of mosque WhatsApp groups, *da'wah* YouTube channels, and Islamic podcasts in Purwokerto. Residents use this media to gain religious knowledge while strengthening social relations.

1. Islamic Communication as Conflict Resolution

Diversity of identities often triggers potential conflicts in multicultural societies. However, the Islamic communication pattern in Purwokerto contributes as a means of conflict resolution. A youth organization leader in Tanjung Village said, "When there is a problem with the people, religious leaders come to mediate. The way is deliberation, no one blames each other. So the conflict can subside." (Interview, Subhan Hadi, 2025) A consensus deliberation approach, which is based on QS. Ali Imran verse 159, is brought to life in everyday life. This approach is effective in reducing prejudice between groups, fostering a sense of togetherness, and maintaining social stability (Arifin, 2022).

In this pattern of communication, religious symbols become the glue, not the breaker. Communication symbols such as greetings, smiles, and expressions of apology become psychological bridges between individuals (Sulaiman, 2020). Islamic communication patterns also encourage the use of polite language, avoid hate speech, and prioritize manners. This is clearly seen in the *da'wah* forums in Purwokerto which emphasize the material of tolerance and brotherhood.

2. Challenges and Dynamics

Nevertheless, the pattern of Islamic communication in Purwokerto is not spared from challenges. Several obstacles arise such as the spread of religious hoaxes through social media, narrow interpretation of religious teachings, and the exclusivity of certain *da'wah* groups. According to an academic in Purwokerto, "The challenge is how do we fight hate speech with an Islamic narrative that is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*." (Interview, Prof. Nur Kholis, 2024).

In facing these challenges, the role of digital literacy is very important. The young generation of Muslims in Purwokerto is required to be critical in sorting out information, verifying sources, and distributing *da'wah* messages wisely (Sari, 2023). The application of the principle of *tabayyun* (clarification of information) is a shield in reducing polarization that can damage social harmony.

3. Synergy of Religious, Community, and Government Leaders

The pattern of Islamic communication in Purwokerto also shows good synergy between religious leaders, the community, and the local government. This collaboration can be seen in programs to foster religious harmony, multicultural *dai* training, and peace declarations ahead of the elections. This coordination pattern can be categorized as a wheel communication pattern, where the information center (religious leaders) becomes a mediator who channels messages to the community (Lubis, 2022). This model ensures that the message of *da'wah* is unbiased, remains in line with the spirit of tolerance, and is easily accepted by all levels of society. In the context of a multicultural society, the star pattern minimizes the occurrence of miscommunication that can lead to horizontal conflicts.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Islamic communication in Purwokerto has proven to play an important role in maintaining the harmony of a multicultural society. Integrative and participatory communication patterns, such as interfaith social service, two-way recitation discussions, and friendship programs, prove that the moral value of *karimah* can penetrate the boundaries of differences. The principles of *tabayyun*, *husnudzon*, and consensus deliberation are able to reduce the potential for social conflict. Communicative Action Theory (Habermas) and Dialogical Theory (Freire) are also relevant to be applied, because an honest, open, and respectful communication approach encourages the growth of tolerance and mutual respect. However, challenges remain, such as religious hoaxes and *da'wah* exclusivity.

It is necessary to strengthen digital literacy so that people, especially the younger generation, are able to sort information with the *tabayyun* principle. Interfaith discussion forums need to be expanded so that openness is maintained. Mosques can be optimized as centers for interfaith empowerment. *Dai* and religious leaders also need to be equipped with multicultural insights so that *da'wah* can soothe all parties. Synergy between religious leaders, the community, and the government must continue to be fostered so that Islamic communication truly becomes a bridge of harmony in pluralistic Purwokerto.

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