



Communication Patterns of Pasundan Synod Christian Church Pastors in Building Interreligious Relations in a Muslim Majority Environment

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Abstract: Pastoral leadership in a Muslim-majority environment presents unique challenges, particularly in fostering harmonious interfaith relationships amidst diverse religious dynamics. This study examines the communication strategies used by pastors of the Pasundan Christian Church to navigate interfaith interactions and resolve conflicts in such an environment. Using a qualitative case study approach, the study used in-depth interviews and direct observation to explore perspectives on interfaith coexistence, sources of conflict, and effective resolution mechanisms. The results revealed that inclusive communication patterns centered on empathy, humanity, and interfaith collaboration were essential in fostering mutual understanding and preventing conflict escalation. Pastors demonstrated openness in engaging Muslim religious leaders through dialogue and active participation in community social activities, which effectively dispelled stereotypes and fostered trust. These practices underscore the importance of adaptive communication methods tailored to pluralistic environments. This study contributes theoretically to the field of interfaith communication by highlighting the role of relational inclusivity as a bridge to religious harmony. Practically, it offers valuable insights for religious leaders seeking to promote synergy and peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies. Its implications extend beyond Indonesia, becoming a model for global interfaith cooperation in fostering resilient and cohesive societies.

Keywords: interfaith communication; interfaith relations; plurality; religious diversity; tolerance.

1. Introduction

As a unitary state, Indonesia embodies a vibrant mosaic of ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity that forms the core identity of its people (Sebastian & Alkaff, 2024; Setia & Rahman, 2022). This pluralism should be embraced not only as a sociocultural reality but also as a profound national asset, celebrating diversity as a cornerstone of unity and progress (Mubarok & Rahman, 2021). Celebrating diversity not only strengthens social harmony but also contributes to global efforts to promote inclusivity and sustainable multicultural governance. This is due to the geographical condition of Indonesia, which consists of various islands which have socio-cultural differences, resulting in the emergence of various kinds of primordial ties and identities that relate to the characteristics of the Indonesian nation itself, however, these differences in identity and the existing primordial ties can be united in Single Diversity within the frame of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Christover, 2019). This diversity is not only visible from ethnic and cultural differences, but also from the religions adhered to by Indonesian people. With six official religions recognized by the state, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism, as well as various other local beliefs, Indonesia reflects a portrait of harmony rich in the values of tolerance (Rosyad et al., 2021).

Indonesia is a country with a very high level of religious diversity, with the majority of the population being Muslim, but there are also adherents of other religions, including Christians, Catholics, Hindus, Buddhists and Confucians (Devi, 2020). Therefore, maintaining social harmony and stability requires special attention to interfaith relations, which is a strategic issue. In multifaith

communities, diversity can be an issue, especially when trying to encourage inclusive and peaceful communication between different religious communities. In communities with a Muslim majority, religious leaders—including priests—have an important role in fostering communication that can help foster tolerance, mutual understanding, and harmony in society (Rosyad et al., 2022).

Interreligious communication is not just formal dialogue but involves ongoing interpersonal interaction, as well as the influence of personal and collective values from each religious community (Munawar-Rachman, 2022). In contexts where Muslims predominate, the communication styles of religious leaders, such as clergy, can greatly influence how people perceive and feel about different religious groups. Therefore, pastors not only act as spiritual leaders for their congregation but also as representatives of Christianity in a society where the majority have different beliefs. This requires wise and adaptive communication patterns to support positive interfaith relations.

In many cases, a pastor in a Muslim-majority environment must face various challenges in building social relationships. These challenges include, among other things, differences in theological views, the existence of prejudice or stereotypes, as well as social dynamics that have the potential to influence people's perceptions of Christianity (Amtiran & Kriswibowo, 2024). Harmony in religious tolerance is dynamic harmony and mutual openness. Harmony requires a harmonious atmosphere, mutual cooperation and helping each other. If you cannot cooperate with each other, you should not interfere with others in your religion. Harmony between religious communities is easier to build because of the same beliefs, but this does not rule out the possibility that conflict will not occur. However, harmony between religious communities is more difficult to build because of fundamental differences in beliefs (Pradnyaningrat et al., 2020). Therefore, a communication strategy is needed that is able to embrace differences and foster inclusive values. This inclusive communication approach, in the study of interfaith communication, is known as communication that respects plurality and takes into account the sensitivity of local culture and beliefs.

However, empirical research on pastors' communication patterns in building interreligious relationships in Indonesia, especially in Muslim-majority environments, is still very limited. Most of the literature now published discusses religious tolerance from the perspective of general social or policy views, with little attention paid to the communication styles used by religious leaders in everyday interactions. This suggests a need for more thorough research to fill the gaps in the study of interreligious communication (Cronshaw, 2021).

This research will examine several important aspects related to the communication patterns of priests in Muslim-majority environments, which include the interreligious perspective of life, that the interreligious perspective of life involves the perspective of society and religious figures towards other beliefs. The beliefs held in high regard by majority and minority populations have a significant impact on how people view interfaith life in Muslim-dominated environments. Living in a Muslim-majority community requires a pastor to be able to express his religious teachings effectively and understand and respect the views of others.

Then, conflicts that occur in the surrounding environment, such as conflicts that occur in Muslim-majority environments, include studies of potential conflicts faced by priests in carrying out their religious roles as well as sources of conflict that arise from inter-religious interactions (Seran & Hum, 2022). Then, in resolving the conflict, communication techniques can help reduce tension, either through inter-religious dialogue, a persuasive approach, or through mediation with other religious figures and the surrounding community. Therefore, in dealing with conflict in Muslim-majority environments, pastors need to prioritize an approach based on humanity, mutual understanding and cross-religious cooperation. Appropriate communication techniques can not only help reduce tensions, but also build more harmonious relationships between communities of different faiths. This shows that inclusive and collaborative dialogue is the key to creating peaceful and respectful social life.

Finally, interreligious knowledge is essential for fostering friendly and peaceful relations in a pluralistic society. the idea of interreligious awareness that priests have when carrying out their duties as religious leaders in an environment where Muslims are the majority in that environment

(Islam, 2023). In the context of this research, we will also look at how the concept of interreligious awareness can be translated into inclusive forms of social interaction and communication. In the end, the author hopes to show how pastors build and communicate the concept of interreligious awareness as a basis for forming harmonious relationships with the surrounding community. This interreligious awareness includes a deep understanding of differences in beliefs, acceptance of diversity, and a commitment to creating harmony amidst differences.

To strengthen the theory in this research, several concepts in interreligious communication need to be clarified. One theory that can be used is the Interreligious Dialogue Theory stated by Leonard Swidler (2014), who stated that interreligious dialogue must be based on the principles of mutual understanding, respect and openness. In the context of this research, interreligious communication carried out by pastors of the Pasundan Christian Church Synod emphasizes aspects of inclusivity and empathy, as explained in the interactive communication model by Gudykunst and Kim (2003).

Apart from that, the concept of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) can also be used to understand how religious identity influences interaction patterns in societies that are predominantly Muslim. A strong social identity can become an obstacle to communication if it is not accompanied by an awareness of the importance of tolerance and acceptance of differences. By examining the communication patterns of clergy in Muslim-majority environments, this research can provide a deeper understanding of the important role of interreligious communication in creating harmony in a plural society.

Research on interfaith communication has grown rapidly, especially in the context of multicultural societies. Several previous studies have discussed how interreligious communication can be a major tool in building tolerance and reducing conflict. However, this research has significant differences compared to previous studies. Previous research such as that conducted by (Pradnyaningrat et al., 2020) discussed more aspects of interreligious dialogue in global and multicultural communities in general. Their study highlights the importance of communication in building interfaith understanding but does not highlight the social dynamics in Muslim-majority environments in Indonesia. On the other hand, research has discussed interreligious communication in the Indonesian context but focuses more on aspects of social policies and programs without exploring in depth the communication patterns of religious leaders in daily interactions with the majority community (Hakim, 2018).

This research fills a gap in the study of interreligious communication by focusing on the role of pastors of the Pasundan Synod Christian Church in building interfaith relationships in Muslim-majority environments. By using a case study-based qualitative approach, this research provides an empirical picture of how Christian religious leaders can carry out effective and inclusive communication in a unique social context. Interreligious communication is an important aspect in building harmonious relationships in a plural society. According to (Pradnyaningrat et al., 2020), interreligious dialogue must prioritize the principles of openness and equality in social interactions. This is reinforced by research (Islam, 2023) which shows that communication based on shared experiences can reduce prejudice and increase trust between religious groups.

(Yenuri, 2022) in their study of cross-cultural communication emphasized that understanding differences in cultural and religious identities can increase the effectiveness of inter-religious communication. In the Indonesian context, (Zakiyah et al., 2022) explains that interfaith communication in majority Muslim communities often faces challenges due to differences in theological doctrine and stereotypes that develop in society.

It is also hoped that this research will close the gap in the literature on interreligious communication practices in Indonesia and offer useful suggestions for religious leaders who face the difficulties of plurality. The findings of this research will also help religious organizations and legislators create laws or initiatives that promote efforts to encourage interfaith cooperation. This research advances interreligious communication theory, particularly in relation to the strategies used by religious leaders in minority settings. It is hoped that the results of this study will stimulate more

research on interreligious communication and offer useful suggestions to religious leaders around the world, especially in similar contexts.

2. Research methods

The research method in this article uses a qualitative approach with case studies. To be more comprehensive, this research can clarify data analysis techniques using the Miles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 2013) analysis model which includes three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method developed by Creswell to understand the communication patterns of pastors in building interfaith relationships in Muslim-majority environments. A qualitative approach was chosen because it provides space for researchers to explore existing phenomena in depth, thereby allowing a richer understanding of social interactions that occur in certain contexts (Zuhri & Christiani, 2019). In this research, the focus of the research lies in an in-depth understanding of interreligious communication carried out by pastors of the Pasundan Christian Church (GKP) in Muslim-majority communities.

The case study method allows researchers to examine a particular situation in detail. This study focuses on Pastor Adama, who serves as general secretary at the GKP Synod office in Bandung City, West Java. Pastor Adama was chosen because of his active role in building interfaith communication and practicing an inclusive approach to creating harmonious relations between different religious communities. By choosing priests as the main subject, this research can reveal how a Christian religious leader can manage interreligious relations in a society dominated by Muslims.

This approach also involves various supporting informants, such as religious leaders from the Muslim community, church congregation members, and the surrounding community, to provide a more diverse perspective on the interactions that occur. The information provided by this informant will provide a more holistic understanding of how interreligious communication is carried out in everyday life. By listening to their experiences and views, researchers can capture conditions that may not be visible through interviews with the main subject alone.

The data collection techniques used in this research were in-depth interviews and participatory observation. In-depth interviews allow researchers to dig deeper into the experiences and views of pastors and other informants regarding interfaith communication. In these interviews, the researcher sought to understand the specific ways in which pastors build relationships with Muslims and how this contributes to the creation of social harmony. Meanwhile, participatory observation provides researchers with the opportunity to directly observe interactions between members of communities of different religions, as well as how the community responds to these efforts. According to Patton, this technique is very useful for obtaining richer data, such as social and visual behavior that occurs in the field, which will explore communication dynamics that are not revealed in interviews alone (Handoko et al., 2024).

Apart from interviews and observations, official church documents, social activity reports, and interfaith program archives were also collected as supporting data. This document analysis aims to strengthen the findings obtained from interviews and observations, as well as provide additional evidence regarding the pastor's efforts in implementing programs aimed at increasing interfaith harmony. This documentation also provides a clearer picture of the strategies implemented by pastors to overcome potential conflicts and strengthen relations between religious communities.

The data analysis method used in this research refers to the Miles and Huberman model, which involves three main steps: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Hasanah et al., 2024). Data reduction was carried out by filtering relevant information from interviews, observations and documents to focus on themes related to interfaith communication patterns. After that, the selected data will be presented in a systematic and easy-to-understand form. The final process is drawing conclusions, which allows researchers to identify communication patterns implemented by pastors and their impact on interreligious relations in society.

Overall, the methods used in this research provide a strong foundation for understanding interfaith communication in a pluralistic society, especially in the context of Indonesia which has very wide religious diversity. The combination of in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis allows researchers to obtain a comprehensive picture of how pastors carry out their roles in building and maintaining harmonious interfaith relations. It is hoped that this research will provide new insights into communication strategies that can be implemented by religious leaders to create harmony and unity amidst religious diversity in Indonesia.

3. Results and Discussion

a. Interfaith Life Perspectives

One of the most important things to understand in a multicultural country like Indonesia is the perspective on interfaith existence. This perspective includes how individuals or groups of people view the existence of other religions and how peaceful coexistence can be achieved regardless of religious differences (Hidayatulloh & Saumantri, 2023). Developing an interfaith perspective on life requires an open attitude, mutual respect, and an awareness that diversity is an inseparable part of life. Like the perspective of Pastor Adama who is the secretary at the GKP Synod office. Pastor Adama has a very good perspective on religious tolerance. As mentioned in the interview: "We are all actually the same. Both are Indonesian. What differentiates me from you is only my religion. Besides, we are the same. Because of this, it has become a culture that society should not differentiate only by type of religion" (Interview with Pastor Adama, Bandung, 2024).

Based on the interview, Pastor Adama's religious perspective is inclusive and emphasizes equality. Pastor Adama views religion as part of personal identity that does not hinder unity in social life. For him, even though religions may differ, all people have fundamental similarities as fellow citizens, namely as part of the Indonesian nation. This perspective shows that Pastor Adama has an open view of religious differences, emphasizing the importance of building social relationships without questioning differences in beliefs. This approach places religion as something personal, whereas in a social context, religious differences should not be a barrier to socializing, working together and living side by side.

An interfaith perspective on life acknowledges the existence of other religions and the potential positive values within them. Instead of seeing other religions as rivals or threats, this approach invites people to view them as collaborators in promoting social justice and peace (Rahman & Noor, 2020). In daily practice, this perspective can be realized through positive dialogue, helping each other regardless of religious differences, and cooperation in social activities.

For example, in an environment where the majority of the population is of a certain religion, attitudes that respect diversity can be seen in how the majority community welcomes religious events for people of other religions, or how they provide space for people of other religions to worship. On the other hand, members of minority religions who have an inclusive inter-religious perspective on life will carry out their beliefs while maintaining harmony, not imposing their views, and respecting the values held by the majority. This is, of course, also in line with the results of the interview with Pastor Adama regarding the implementation of social activities both from social communities and other social events as follows.

At GKP Church, we have many interfaith organizations, and interestingly, many friends from the Muslim community gather here. When I, as a pastor, buy something like goods or candy at the front stall, people are sometimes surprised to see Muslims entering the church office. For them, it may be unique and interesting, but for us here, it has become part of the culture. Our communication with the community is more towards relationships between people, not based on religion.

I also feel that closeness to other religious figures and interfaith communities is very important. For example, we have the 'Youth Interfaith Camp' program, where there are activities such as the

'Religious Cafe' which presents religious figures from various beliefs. Here, religious figures can answer questions about their beliefs, and often this event helps dismantle the misunderstandings that exist in society about religion.

Apart from that, we have a program we call 'Jagaraya'. So, at Christmas, the church parking lot is guarded by mosque youth and those who arrange parking. On the other hand, during Eid al-Fitr, we provide parking at the church, and the priest helps guard it. This is our form of communication with society that transcends religious differences so that we can help each other (Interview with Pastor Adama, Bandung, 2024).

We also have a 'Clean Village' activity, where we clean the village together. For the *posyandu* program, women from churches and mosques join forces to build and run this *posyandu* together. At the church, we provide a well with a tap outside the church so that local people can use it. When it floods, we prepare lifeboats that can be used for evacuation. If the flood gets higher, the church opens a public kitchen for the community. We do all this in the name of humanity, as a form of mutual help, without regard to one's religion or belief.

In my opinion, interfaith action is not enough to just involve seminars or discussions but must be realized through joint activities. In our church, interfaith action is truly realized in the form of real cooperation, which aims to strengthen togetherness and mutual respect between religious communities in our environment (Interview with Pastor Adama, Bandung, 2024).

Based on the results of these interviews, it can be seen that the GKP Church carries out an interfaith approach that is inclusive and based on humanity and relationships between citizens, not based on religious differences. The GKP Church builds closeness with the community, including the Muslim community, through various joint activities involving religious leaders and interfaith communities. The Church plays an active role in creating a harmonious environment, where human values, mutual assistance and cooperation are the main priorities. Churches not only function as places of worship, but also as centers of social activities that benefit everyone, regardless of their religious background. The GKP Church has succeeded in building effective and harmonious communication patterns in a multicultural society, strengthening relations between religious believers, and helping reduce misunderstandings through activities that are real and relevant to the wider community.

However, this inter-religious perspective on life is often faced with challenges, such as prejudice, stereotypes, or theological differences that can influence individual attitudes towards other religions. Therefore, education that instills the values of tolerance and mutual understanding is important to foster this perspective from an early age. In addition, religious figures play an important role in increasing public awareness of the importance of peaceful coexistence. A tolerant view of life across religions allows individuals to inspire and learn from each other while living in harmony. A stronger and more peaceful society will result from appreciating and celebrating religious diversity together, where everyone feels empowered and valued without having to sacrifice their personal identity.

b. Conflict in Interreligious Relations

Conflicts between groups or between people from different backgrounds—religious, ethnic, or cultural are inevitable in diverse communities. These disputes can range from outright miscommunication to pressure that endangers social harmony. Differences in opinions, attitudes and behavior that are not fully understood or simply misunderstood by others often lead to conflict. In many cases, conflicts that arise in the surrounding environment can also be exacerbated by a lack of effective communication and minimal space for open dialogue (Al Qutuby et al., 2020).

One example of a common conflict is people's discomfort with religious activities that appear 'foreign' or different from what they believe. For example, certain religious activities involving gatherings or rituals that are poorly understood by the local community can give rise to suspicion or

prejudice. People who lack information about these activities may feel uneasy or even perceive these activities as a threat to their beliefs. Differences in worship practices, religious symbols, or ritual events can be the main trigger if they are not balanced with sufficient education or good interaction between communities.

As in the interview with Pastor Adama regarding the conflict that has been experienced by the church or church congregation, namely as follows.

This GKP Church is actually an old church. If we look at its history, this church has had many paths in its growth. The Gospel message developed until it became a local church in West Java, and in 1934, this church was officially known as the Pasundan Christian Church.

In its history, there have also been challenges that have arisen, especially due to misunderstandings or incorrect issues regarding this church. In one area in Cianjur, for example, there was a conflict sparked by people spreading slander about the GKP. These skewed issues often circulate in society, which ultimately gives rise to misunderstandings about the existence and activities of our church.

However, in every teaching delivered by the GKP synod, we always remind the congregation to maintain harmony in society. We really emphasize the importance of peaceful coexistence, even though there are challenges from certain groups who may lack understanding and tend to be intolerant, especially from communities that are predominantly Muslim. We remain committed to building good communication and mutual respect, regardless of the challenges we face, with the hope that messages of kindness and peace can be received by all parties. Other conflicts experienced by our congregation in Dayeuhkolot. There are churches that have been closed and are not allowed to carry out worship for around 20 years now. In fact, the current condition of the church has been completely demolished. So every time we want to worship, we always disband. Then, the role of local officials is that no one dares to speak out about religious freedom, and we accept that there is injustice in religious freedom. However, relations with the surrounding neighbors are quite good. There are no problems with the church. This was done by outsiders who were, of course, irresponsible. However, this does not give us close access to help people, especially those with different religions from us. Like when there is a flood, the church has lifeboats for evacuation. And if the flood levels have risen to the point of having to evacuate, the church likes to provide assistance such as opening a public kitchen. This is, of course, done on humanitarian grounds, not purely on religious grounds. The real form is not just about theory and seminars but there are real forms of action and joint work.

Then in social life, if there are differences of opinion, it is enough to just respect each other, but there are also Christians who are intolerant. Even people who are diverse Christians like to criticize each other too. Apart from that, there are even those who enter interfaith communities with the motivation to evangelize, not because of humanity. In fact, if you want to 'preach' to Muslims, or evangelize, what kind of 'guidance' does that person get, not based on coercion or bad intentions? (Interview with Pastor Adama, Bandung, 2024).

Based on the results of this interview, it can be concluded that in the long journey of establishing the GKP church, there were various conflicts faced. The conflicts experienced by GKP are mostly caused by misunderstandings and negative issues that develop in society, often originating from irresponsible outside parties. This, of course, deprives a person of their religious freedom, as stipulated by law, that in the context of human rights, freedom of religion and belief is a fundamental right recognized by the 1945 Constitution and must be guaranteed by the state. Article 28E paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution confirms that every person has the right to embrace a religion and worship according to his religion (MKN, 1945), while Article 29 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution ensures that the state guarantees the freedom of every resident to embrace religion and worship according to his religion and beliefs (Humas_ntb, 2024).

When analyzing conflicts that arise in the neighborhood, it is important to focus on the underlying reasons, which may include prejudice, differences in values, or unequal distribution of resources. Conflict analysis must also take into account external variables that can influence public opinion, such as news reports or views of public figures that can influence public opinion (Sunarso, 2023). This is where the important role of religious leaders, community leaders and the government is to act as mediators in resolving conflicts. Through constructive dialogue and interfaith programs, diverse groups can understand each other, reduce tensions, and find common ground.

To effectively handle disputes in the environment, inclusive cross-religious and cross-cultural communication is needed. A sense of unity can be strengthened by involving various parties in joint activities, such as mutual cooperation, *posyandu* (integrated health service post), or other social programs. People can change their perspectives in this way, seeing differences as opportunities to work together, create harmony, and build an environment of peace and mutual respect.

c. Conflict Resolution Strategy

One effective strategy for reducing conflict is to prioritize a dialogical approach. Open dialogue allows each party to convey their views and feelings directly, thereby allowing both parties to understand each other's perspectives (Humaizi & Zulkarnain, 2024). For example, when there is a misunderstanding regarding certain religious activities, representatives from each community can meet to discuss the root of the problem, seek agreement, and establish common rules so that these differences do not disrupt social life. With regular and open dialogue, the potential for conflict can be reduced and people can better understand the diversity that exists around them.

Cross-community collaboration is also part of an important conflict resolution strategy. Through joint activities, such as social service, cooperation, or humanitarian programs, relations between residents can be strengthened (Saifuddin, 2019). For example, interfaith communities can hold social service programs during disasters, where churches, mosques and other local communities work together to help affected residents. By working together in real action, trust and empathy between community members will grow. This kind of collaboration creates a sense of mutual belonging and increases camaraderie, which reduces the potential for conflict in the future.

As in the results of the interview with Pastor Adama, in resolving conflicts that arise, a direct approach with the community is one of the ways that has been carried out, such as establishing good relationships with religious leaders, inter-religious communities, supporting inter-faith communities, working together to build inter-religious programs in carrying out joint work actions are ways of approaching the community.

Networking and collaboration are very important for us at the Pasundan Christian Church. We are trying to build a strong network with various interfaith communities, including friends in Jakatarub, colleagues from the interfaith peace community in Bandung, and friends from NU, Muhammadiyah, and Ahmadiyah. We also maintain good relations with other non-Muslim interfaith groups, including support from Unisba. This network often helps us deal with unexpected situations. For example, there is a 'Sharing Blessings' program which is carried out after Friday prayers, with donations in the form of rice from Kang Acil and friends.

We always adhere to the principle that there is no need to do anything too big or extravagant. In fact, simple things can often increase a deeper sense of brotherhood. Apart from that, we are involved in Balad (Bandung Lautan Damai) which we fully support as a form of interfaith collaboration.

In our office, there are also many Muslim employees, as well as the surrounding community which is predominantly Muslim. However, during our almost seven years of operation, this situation has proceeded safely and without conflict. Daily interactions with neighbors, especially local traders, also always go well without any significant problems. In fact, if you look deeper, the GKP congregation itself lives in a Muslim community. Many congregation families have

family members with different religious backgrounds, and they can live in harmony in family life (Interview with Pastor Adama, Bandung, 2024).

By building a peaceful and friendly life with people of different beliefs, explanations can then be given and tolerance education in understanding inter-faith and cross-cultural understanding also needs to be instilled in order to prevent conflict in the future. Through discussions, workshops or seminars that encourage people to understand the importance of diversity, individuals become more sensitive to other people's cultures or beliefs.

The results of this research indicate that the communication patterns of pastors of the Pasundan Synod Christian Church in building interfaith relationships in Muslim-majority environments are based on openness, empathy and social collaboration. Pastors use an open communication approach by actively participating in interfaith dialogue. This approach helps eliminate prejudice and creates a more inclusive space for discussion between Christian and Muslim communities. This inclusive attitude is also strengthened by the involvement of priests in various social activities, such as community service, humanitarian aid, and religious discussions involving figures from other religions.

In addition, this research found that the communication strategies used by pastors include using polite language and avoiding confrontation when discussing sensitive issues. With this approach, pastors can build better relationships with Muslim communities, reduce tensions and strengthen social cohesion. However, this research also identified several challenges, such as the persistence of prejudice among people who do not understand Christian teachings, as well as structural obstacles in the form of regulations that limit religious activities in some areas. To overcome this challenge, collaboration-based communication strategies and educational approaches are key to building better understanding between religious communities.

The research can be analyzed through the lens of communication theory, particularly using frameworks such as Nonviolent Communication, Contact Theory, and Functional Conflict Theory to better understand the dynamics and implications of the strategies employed by pastors in interfaith settings. The research highlights the use of polite language and avoidance of confrontation when discussing sensitive issues, which aligns with the principles of Nonviolent Communication (NVC). NVC emphasizes empathy, active listening, and respectful dialogue to foster mutual understanding and reduce tensions. By focusing on humanity and shared values, pastors effectively address emotional triggers that might escalate conflicts, promoting peaceful coexistence (Rosenberg & Chopra, 2015).

The study's findings on building relationships through collaboration-based communication strategies resonate with Contact Theory, which posits that meaningful intergroup interactions can reduce prejudice and foster positive attitudes. The pastors' efforts to engage Muslim communities in social activities and dialogue create opportunities for direct contact, breaking down stereotypes and encouraging mutual respect (Shamoa-Nir, 2024). This approach is particularly effective in pluralistic societies where religious diversity is a source of potential tension. The persistence of prejudice and structural obstacles identified in the research can be examined through Functional Conflict Theory, which views conflict as an opportunity for growth and social change. The challenges faced by pastors—such as misunderstandings about Christian teachings—highlight the need for proactive communication forums like interfaith dialogues or educational initiatives to transform conflict into constructive outcomes (Wibisono et al., 2024).

The research underscores the importance of collaboration-based strategies, which align with Strategic Communication principles. By actively engaging Islamic leaders and participating in community activities, pastors employ strategic messaging that builds trust and strengthens social cohesion. This targeted approach helps overcome structural barriers, ensuring that communication efforts are tailored to local contexts while addressing systemic challenges (Wibisono, 2021). Integrating communication theories into the analysis deepens our understanding of how pastors

navigate interfaith dynamics in Muslim-majority environments. The use of nonviolent communication fosters empathy and reduces tensions, while contact theory explains how direct interaction dismantles stereotypes. Functional conflict theory provides a framework for addressing challenges constructively, while strategic communication ensures that efforts are intentional and context-sensitive. Together, these theories highlight the transformative potential of effective communication in fostering interfaith harmony and social cohesion.

4. Conclusion

This research highlights the importance of interfaith communication in building harmonious relations in Muslim-majority environments. By using an inclusive communication approach based on humanity and empathy, the pastor of the Pasundan Synod Christian Church can create a space for open and constructive dialogue with the surrounding Muslim community. The research results show that active involvement in interfaith social activities, an open attitude towards interreligious dialogue, and cooperation in humanitarian action are the main factors in creating harmonious relations. This strengthens the theory of interfaith communication, which emphasizes interaction, symbolism and social involvement as important elements in building shared understanding. Practically, this research provides implications for religious leaders and policy makers to design more inclusive interfaith interaction programs. The main recommendation from this research is the importance of interfaith education from an early age, the formation of interreligious communication forums, and the implementation of more adaptive communication strategies in a multicultural society.

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