

Strengthening the Communication System of the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB) in Serdang Bedagai

Received: 07-08-2024; Revised:20-09-2024; Accepted: 30-10-2024

Fatimah Zahra*
Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN)
Sumatera Utara Medan
E-mail:
Fatimah0101202048@uinsu.ac.id

Hasan Sazali
Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN)
Sumatera Utara Medan
E-mail: hasansazali@uinsu.ac.id

*) *Corresponding Author*

Keywords: Strengthening;
Communication System; Interfaith
Harmony; FKUB;

Abstract: This study aims to investigate the improvement of the FKUB communication system in Serdang Bedagai. This study uses a descriptive qualitative methodology. This study uses interpersonal communication theory, which emphasizes the importance of face-to-face interaction and touch between individuals in transmitting messages, building relationships, and promoting mutual understanding. The findings of the study indicate that: 1) FKUB in Serdang Bedagai functions as an institution that fosters religious harmony and actively promotes unity among diverse religious communities. FKUB was established through collaborative community initiatives and government support with the aim of building, preserving, and empowering religious groups to promote harmony and prosperity. 2) Efforts by FKUB Serdang Bedagai to promote religious harmony: FKUB collaborates and forms agreements with people who act as guardians of harmony and religious authorities from various regions, with a special emphasis on Dolok Masihul District. The guardians of harmony work together with religious adherents, harmony authorities at the village level, and government officials, including the local police. 3) Improving the FKUB Communication System: As an institution that promotes interfaith harmony, FKUB is actively involved in discussions with religious and community leaders, and effectively facilitates and channels the aspirations of religious and community groups. This responsibility requires an efficient communication process, which involves various components that must be actively involved so that the communication process can run well.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki peningkatan sistem komunikasi FKUB di Serdang Bedagai. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi kualitatif deskriptif. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori komunikasi interpersonal, yang menekankan pentingnya interaksi tatap muka dan sentuhan antar individu dalam transmisi pesan, membangun hubungan, dan mempromosikan saling pengertian. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: 1) FKUB di Serdang Bedagai berfungsi sebagai lembaga yang membina kerukunan umat beragama dan secara aktif mendorong persatuan di antara beragam komunitas agama. FKUB didirikan melalui inisiatif kolaboratif masyarakat dan dukungan pemerintah dengan tujuan membangun, melestarikan, dan memberdayakan kelompok-kelompok agama untuk mempromosikan kerukunan dan kesejahteraan. 2) Upaya FKUB Serdang Bedagai untuk mempromosikan kerukunan umat beragama: FKUB berkolaborasi dan membentuk kesepakatan dengan orang-orang yang bertindak sebagai penjaga kerukunan dan otoritas agama dari berbagai daerah, dengan penekanan khusus pada Kecamatan Dolok Masihul. Para penjaga kerukunan bekerja bersama dengan para pemeluk agama, otoritas kerukunan di tingkat desa, dan pejabat pemerintah, termasuk polisi setempat. 3) Meningkatkan Sistem Komunikasi FKUB: Sebagai lembaga yang mempromosikan kerukunan umat beragama, FKUB secara aktif terlibat dalam diskusi dengan para tokoh agama dan masyarakat, dan secara efektif memfasilitasi dan menyalurkan aspirasi kelompok-kelompok agama dan masyarakat. Tanggung jawab ini membutuhkan proses komunikasi yang efisien, yang melibatkan berbagai komponen yang harus terlibat secara aktif agar proses komunikasi dapat berjalan dengan baik.

INTRODUCTION

Interfaith harmony refers to the ability of individuals, groups, and communities with diverse religious beliefs to work together and coexist peacefully in an environment that respects and accommodates religious, belief, and cultural diversity. Interfaith harmony has important social, national, and governmental significance in Indonesia (Mubarok, 2014). Interfaith harmony has always been crucial in Indonesia because of its diverse nature, encompassing various religions, ideologies, and cultural traditions. The Central Bureau of Statistics reports that the Indonesian government officially recognizes six religions and more than 300 ethnic groups. (Dalimunthe, Syah Ahmad Qudus; Mailin, 2023). Examples such as these demonstrate the challenges inherent in cultural and theological diversity, which require strong collaboration among religious communities in Indonesia.

The FKUB in Serdang Bedagai faces challenges in managing religious and cultural diversity, raising awareness of tolerance, and preventing potential local conflicts. Limited human resources and funds are also obstacles in implementing programs that support interfaith harmony. Interfaith harmony refers to a state of interconnectedness between different religions, characterized by respect, understanding, mutual love, and equal opportunity to practice their religious teachings. Harmony also includes cooperation in a broader context in society, nation, and state within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, as guided by Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (Naibaho, 2024). Interfaith harmony in this case facilitates effective collaboration in the political, social, and economic fields (Ulfa & Maria, 2016).

The formation of harmony among individuals with diverse religious backgrounds not only increases religious understanding but also facilitates understanding of variations in beliefs and practices. This is clearly seen in Dolok Masihul District, located in Serdang Bedagai Regency, where there are 42,456 Muslims, 9,789 Protestant Christians, 1,278 Catholics, 16 Hindus, 253 Buddhists, and 15 Confucians. The majority of the population in Dolok Masihul District is Muslim, but they live side by side with residents who are Protestant Christians, Catholics, Hindus, Buddhists, and Confucians. Individuals from various religious beliefs live side by side harmoniously without engaging in conflict (Banyumaskab, 2019).

FKUB in Serdang Bedagai plays an important role in addressing the challenges of religious and cultural diversity by facilitating interfaith dialogue to strengthen tolerance. They also strive to raise public awareness of the importance of harmony through education and outreach. In dealing with potential local conflicts, FKUB acts as a mediator to resolve disputes peacefully. Despite limited resources, FKUB continues to implement programs to strengthen harmony and cooperation between religious communities. Religious peace in Indonesia is legally established and monitored by the government and civil society, as stated by the Ministry of Law and Human Rights in 2011. Religious coherence in this scenario is maintained through government initiatives such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education, interfaith cooperation, and inter-social discourse. Peace between religious communities has an important meaning in the lives of many people in Indonesia because it is a fundamental part of the existence of society. (Minister of State for Empowerment of State Apparatus and Bureaucratic Reform, 2021). Religious harmony promotes social stability and security, fosters a refined and accepting

society, and increases interfaith understanding. Therefore, FKUB, the Government, and the community continue to strive to improve mutual harmony, especially by strengthening the communication system.

In his work, Tatang M. Amirin (1996) provides a description of the system as a collection of parts that carry out activities or organize schemes or procedures to carry out a processing activity with the aim of achieving one or more goals (Saputra, 2016). Communication plays an important role in human life by facilitating interaction. However, for communication to be effective, feedback is needed to ensure that the desired goals are achieved. Communication comes from the Latin word "cum," which functions as a preposition indicating "with" or "together with," and "unus," which is a numerical term meaning "one." The noun "communio" gives rise to the English word "communion," which indicates togetherness, unity, fellowship, combination, affiliation, and partnership (Simon & Alouini, 2004). The communication system is an inseparable aspect of society that cannot be avoided or replaced. The communication system functions as a medium to convey important information, influence others, arouse interest, reduce hostility, and motivate individuals to achieve educational behavioral missions (Saputra, 2016). Improving the communication system is crucial in the application of communication science, because it directly impacts the efficiency of the communication process. The success of implementing happiness and harmony in society depends on providing encouragement. Naturally, effective communication is essential in several contexts, including personal interactions, as well as in professional environments and community organizations.

This study is entitled "Strengthening the Communication System of the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB) in Serdang Bedagai" and has important novelties compared to previous studies. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Ulfa Mudha in Banda Aceh and M. Abdul Aziz in Banyumas, focused on exploring FKUB communication strategies and the challenges faced in these locations. Ulfa emphasized the use of various communication techniques, while Abdul Aziz explained the strategies used by FKUB to promote interfaith harmony. This study is different by highlighting the aspect of strengthening the FKUB communication system in the Serdang Bedagai area which has unique characteristics related to local religious and cultural diversity. In addition, this study focuses on how FKUB modifies and improves the effectiveness of its communication system in the local context to encourage harmony in Dolok Masihul District. The importance of this study lies in the effort to better understand the role of FKUB in improving social cohesion amidst the challenges of community diversity, which has not been discussed in depth in the context of problems in Serdang Bedagai.

This study uses a descriptive qualitative methodology. Creswell (2008) defines descriptive qualitative research as a methodical technique for understanding certain events or incidents through the collection, analysis, and interpretation of descriptive or narrative data (Anak, 2008). The software used for qualitative data analysis in this study is NVivo 12 plus. NVivo is software designed by Qualitative Solution and Research (QSR) international for the purpose of analyzing qualitative data. The focus of this study is the management of FKUB Serdang Bedagai. The initial method used for data collection is observation, followed by in-depth interviews, and finally documentation. Interviews are activities to collect information directly by asking questions to sources. In this study, the researcher used an unstructured interview methodology, which

specifically targets respondents who have expertise and can explore the situation, as well as respondents who have a higher level of awareness regarding the information needed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB) in Serdang Bedagai has a very important responsibility to maintain harmony and tolerance between religious communities. FKUB acts as a mediator, educator, and facilitator of interfaith dialogue, particularly focusing on resolving disputes, promoting tolerance through education, and organizing discussions among religious leaders. FKUB has implemented several steps to improve the communication system of its members. These steps include providing training and workshops to improve the skills of members, utilizing information technology, and holding regular meetings to discuss existing problems and develop collaborative solutions. In addition, FKUB actively advocates for interfaith harmony by engaging in collaborative social initiatives, facilitating interfaith conversations, and spreading positive awareness about the importance of harmony and tolerance. Implementation of communication system improvements is achieved by utilizing a well-organized communication plan, empowering special working groups, and conducting regular monitoring and assessments to identify barriers and determine appropriate solutions.

FKUB Serdang Bedagai faces barriers such as limited resources and differences in perspectives among its members. However, with the involvement of various stakeholders and the improvement of its internal capabilities, FKUB has succeeded in building an effective and efficient communication system. Efforts to improve the communication system have yielded good results in fostering harmony and tolerance between religious communities, but there are still obstacles that need to be resolved. Through continuous study and development, FKUB is expected to take a more significant role in upholding religious harmony in Serdang Bedagai. A critical analysis of the factors influencing religious harmony in Serdang Bedagai shows that there are internal and external elements that play a significant role. Internal factors include the varying attitudes and behaviors of members of religious communities, such as tolerance, openness, and willingness to engage in dialogue.

Lack of understanding of other religious teachings or negative stereotypes can create tension, requiring more intensive education and socialization efforts. In addition, leadership in each religious community greatly influences how harmony is maintained; leaders who are able to demonstrate an inclusive attitude and build good relationships will strengthen harmony. On the external side, factors such as government policies, socio-economic conditions, and the media also play a role in shaping the dynamics of harmony. Government policies that support interfaith dialogue and the promotion of harmony can strengthen collaboration between communities. Conversely, negative news or conflicts highlighted by the media can worsen the image of interfaith and create tensions. Therefore, the success of interfaith harmony in Serdang Bedagai requires a deep understanding of the interaction between these factors and a shared commitment to creating an environment conducive to dialogue and cooperation.

FKUB in Serdang Bedagai

FKUB, located in Serdang Bedagai, functions as an institution dedicated to fostering interfaith harmony and promoting unity among individuals with diverse beliefs. Its main function is to build, maintain, and empower religious communities to achieve harmony and prosperity. FKUB was formed by the community and supported by the government.

The Interfaith Harmony Forum is responsible for policy making, implementation, standardization, technical guidance, and evaluation in the field of interfaith harmony (Prayuda et al., 2019). FKUB Serdang Bedagai engages in constructive dialogue with religious and community leaders, effectively communicates the goals of religious and community organizations, disseminates religious regulations and policies related to interfaith harmony and community development, and establishes a secretariat tailored to the needs of the community.

Efforts of FKUB Serdang Bedagai in Developing Interfaith Harmony

FKUB Serdang Bedagai is committed to promoting interfaith harmony through various efforts. This includes fostering cooperation and mutual agreement among representatives of various religions, especially in Dolok Masihul District. FKUB also works with religious leaders to ensure harmony between religious communities. In addition, FKUB also works with harmony officials at the village level, as well as the local government and police, to uphold and maintain harmony in the community.

Dolok Masihul is a district in Serdang Bedagai Regency. In 2012, conflict arose in Dolok Masihul due to a service held in a house of worship by a pastor and attended by people from various areas who were not residents of Dolok Masihul. The incident was reported to the village government by the local community, as it was discovered that the house of worship did not have the necessary permits. The village government immediately notified FKUB Serdang Bedagai about the incident, which prompted a quick response from FKUB to mobilize religious leaders and pastors. FKUB offered guidance and resolution to address the problem. Over the past twelve years, there have been no recorded incidents of inter-religious conflict in Dolok Masihul District.

FKUB Serdang Bedagai has also implemented measures to enforce the policy. Based on Regional Regulation (Perda) of Serdang Bedagai Regency Number 1 of 2018, FKUB has been granted an exception for Building Permits (IMB) for houses of worship. This regulation was later modified and replaced by the Regent Regulation (Cara et al., 2021). The Building Permit (IMB) of the Regional Government allows the provision of IMB services for residential buildings that have been constructed. The criteria for establishing houses of worship are regulated in the PBM of Religion and the Minister of Home Affairs Number 9 of 2006 (Sazali et al., 2015).

Implementation of Strengthening the Communication System of FKUB

In order to successfully promote interfaith harmony, FKUB Serdang Bedagai must consistently improve its communication system in order to carry out activities and programs effectively. Each stage of communication between participants must have a clear purpose and can be implemented effectively. FKUB, an institution dedicated to fostering interfaith harmony, oversees various communication processes. This includes conducting interfaith harmony dialogues with religious and community leaders, as well as accommodating and channeling the aspirations of religious and community organizations. FKUB also actively participates in religious activities and ensures that representatives from each religion are involved in its management in Serdang Bedagai. The goal is to create an inclusive environment where the community can freely express their aspirations, preventing feelings of isolation among the minority population in Dolok Masihul. The completion of this operation depends on the communication process. In order for the communication process to run well, several components must be present.

However, if the communication process alone is not enough, FKUB also has additional goals, such as fulfilling the tasks given to naturally foster a sense of harmony in the community's consciousness. The effectiveness of promoting religious harmony in the Dolok Masihul community depends on the interconnectedness of factors that strengthen the communication system built by FKUB Serdang Bedagai. The following is an explanation of the relationship between various elements in improving the communication system:

Tabel 1. Communication System Components and Strengthening

No	Components	Strengthening the Communication System
1	Communicator	- In determining the communicator, FKUB chooses a guardian who is a member of FKUB Serdang Bedagai

The ongoing improvement of the FKUB communication system cannot be separated from the warm welcome from the community in Dolok Masihul District. Despite the diversity of religious beliefs, society consistently demonstrates a commitment to accepting differences and fostering a spirit of tolerance between religious communities. This is very important to maintain the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia, which we must pass on to future generations, especially the millennial generation, generation Z, and the younger generation. We must continue to maintain this positive perspective.

Run FKUB, in particular: Conduct discussions with community leaders and religious leaders, as stated in Article 8 paragraph 1. Facilitate the goals of the community and religious institutions. Channel the goals of the community and religion into ideas that motivate the governor's policies. Implement a process of introducing individuals to religious rules, regulations, and policies that promote religious unity and community strengthening. Submit a written proposal for the establishment of a place of worship. (Education & Culture, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Research conducted by researchers from FKUB Serdang Bedagai has revealed the significant significance played by various initiatives in promoting interfaith harmony. Engaging in harmonious dialogue, FKUB Sergai organizes weekly webinars or socialization sessions as a proactive step to foster interfaith harmony. The aim is to build strong bonds among local residents and ensure the preservation of interfaith harmony in Dusun Dolok Masihul. In order to grant a dispensation for a building permit for a house of worship, the community must meet the requirements for each establishment of a house of worship. These requirements include collecting ID card data of at least 90 people that have been approved by local authorities, obtaining approval from at least 60 people that have been approved by the village head, and obtaining recommendations from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Serdang Bedagai Regency and FKUB Serdang Bedagai Regency. Through improving communication networks and collaboration with the police, religious leaders, and organizations, FKUB has succeeded in promoting peace and preventing conflict in Dolok Masihul for the past twelve years. This study aims to provide readers with further understanding of the improved FKUB communication system and the implementation of policies related to interfaith harmony, especially in Indonesia.

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