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COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR HINDU RELIGIOUS COUNSELING IN DENPASAR CITY

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Abstract

Communication strategy is an essential aspect of Hindu religious counseling in Denpasar City. However, communication in Hindu religious counseling in Denpasar City often faces challenges due to the heterogeneity and diverse cultural characteristics of the counseling audience. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the communication strategies of Hindu religious counselors under the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Denpasar City, focusing on the planning, implementation, and implications of communication strategies in Hindu religious counseling. These three aspects are analyzed using the S-M-C-R communication model and the S-O-R theory. This research employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Data collection methods include observation, interviews, documentation, and literature study. The study results indicate that the planning of communication strategies in Hindu religious counseling revolves around key communication elements: the Hindu religious counselor as the source, the message delivered, the communication channel, the recipient, and the effect (response). The implementation of communication strategies in Hindu religious counseling in the field involves several key steps, such as preparing comprehensive materials before delivering the counseling, conveying the material clearly and accurately to the community, and providing justification and evaluation of the counseling materials presented.

Keywords: Communication Strategy, Hindu Religious Counseling, Ministry of Religious Affairs Denpasar City

I. INTRODUCTION

Planning and communication strategies are crucial for religious counselors in conveying religious messages. Besides helping to establish their recognition and presence, Hindu religious counseling aims to provide religious guidance to the Hindu community. In the past, religious messages were delivered through storytelling (metutur or satua), whereas today, with advancements in information technology, significant changes have occurred. The development of information technology has extended to internet-based and digital systems, making information accessible not only through television or radio but also through platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, blogs, and Instagram.

Religious counselors are regarded as the frontliners in fostering the community. They play a vital and strategic role in self-control, shaping the moral values of future generations, and maintaining religious harmony. They also serve as the government's representatives in conveying the vision, mission, programs, and activities of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (Anwas, 2004). Recognizing these aspects, the government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, particularly the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Denpasar City, provides Hindu religious counselors to communicate religious messages using a respectful, wise, and thoughtful approach. The availability of Hindu religious counselors in Denpasar City is expected to offer maximum religious counseling services. Currently, there are six civil servant (PNS) counselors and sixty non-civil servant (non-PNS) counselors serving a Hindu population of approximately 675,724 people in Denpasar City.

Hindu religious counseling is consistently and systematically provided to the Hindu community. The planning of messages or topics in religious counseling is structured according to religious norms outlined in the Tri Kerangka Agama Hindu (Three Frameworks of Hindu Religion): tattwa (philosophy), susila (ethics), and upacara (rituals), using religious language. The material is adapted or modified based on local cultural wisdom. Providing Hindu

religious counseling to the community serves as a foundation for strengthening knowledge of Hindu teachings and concepts, thereby ensuring a comprehensive and adequate understanding of religion.

The selection of media for delivering messages in religious counseling is also crucial. Ineffective community engagement often results from improper media selection. The choice of media should align with the classification of the counseling participants (Cangara, 2017). If Hindu religious counselors can carefully plan and implement communication strategies effectively, greater attention and better results can be achieved, particularly by the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Denpasar City.

Denpasar City is a modern society with advanced education, making it a rationalist community. Examining communication strategies in religious practices is interesting. For instance, in the past, the Melasti ritual was conducted by walking, but nowadays, some people use vehicles while others still walk. This duality highlights the coexistence of modernization and traditional values. Religious counselors serve as a bridge in addressing societal issues by providing understanding of both traditional and modern religious practices. Communication strategy is closely related to the objectives and challenges that arise. It requires planning on how to address these challenges effectively (Effendi, 2006). To achieve these goals, communication strategies must be operationalized tactically, as religious counseling implementation may vary depending on the situation and conditions.

A well-structured communication strategy aims to change the knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of the counseling participants. The strategy should integrate communication management and planning to address challenges encountered during the communication process. In this context, Hindu religious counselors use media as a public space for delivering religious messages, ensuring openness in community development efforts. Various communication strategies are employed to enhance the effectiveness of

religious counseling in the modern city and society of Denpasar (Indraswari, 2016).

Hindu religious counselors, as the guiding figures of the community, require regulatory support and proper infrastructure. Various innovations in religious counseling should be backed by comprehensive regulations to ensure smooth implementation without creating new issues. As *dharma pracaraka* (religious propagators), Hindu religious counselors need effective communication strategies to guide the community and foster religious behavior and well-being through counseling.

Both religious counselors and the Hindu community face complex challenges in maintaining and preparing a strong future generation. The primary challenge for religious counselors is to maintain professionalism and accountability, where their performance is evaluated based on competence, effort, and results (Mahaputra, 2016). Religious counseling should not merely focus on program dissemination but also emphasize continuous efforts and evaluations.

Although Hinduism remains the majority religion, Hindus must deepen their religious understanding to coexist harmoniously in a diverse society. Social conditions demand higher competition in employment and financial stability, pushing individuals to prioritize economic gains over religious considerations.

Various religious challenges persist in Denpasar City, such as a rationalist, economic-driven, and practical mindset, as well as urban congestion and dense housing areas, limiting open spaces for religious and social events. Considering these factors, Hindu religious counselors must develop effective communication strategies to ensure religious messages are well received.

Work demands and economic needs pose challenges to Hindu religious counseling efforts. Despite a growing curiosity in religious matters, religious concepts are often viewed as providing little material benefit. Consequently, time efficiency and practicality become priorities for economically driven individuals (Nurhadi, Zikri, Kurniawan, 2017).

These challenges can reduce the effectiveness of religious counseling conducted by the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Denpasar

City. Difficulties in instilling Hindu teachings within the community negatively impact the implementation of religious counseling programs, hindering their objectives of enhancing religious knowledge, fostering moral values, and promoting interfaith harmony, especially among the youth.

Further analysis of communication strategies in Hindu religious counseling is essential, as communication strategies are key factors in successful religious counseling. The lack of analysis on communication strategies in the era of globalization and technological advancements limits reference materials and inspiration for religious counselors in designing effective counseling plans. A thorough analysis of communication strategies can serve as a benchmark for optimizing religious counseling approaches, ultimately strengthening the core objectives of Hindu religious counseling programs.

II. METHOD

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document studies to understand the communication strategies implemented by Hindu religious instructors in Denpasar City. The research informants consisted of Hindu religious instructors, Hindu communities receiving counseling, and relevant stakeholders from religious institutions. Data analysis was conducted through stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing to identify communication patterns, message delivery techniques, and challenges in Hindu religious counseling in the region.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The planning of communication strategies in a very simple framework is always associated with how to create effective communication (Randa, 2019). Although planning is a management aspect, whereas communication is the process of disseminating or exchanging information, this makes the planning of communication strategies very important for Hindu religious instructors at the Ministry of

Religion of Denpasar City. The communication strategy planning process is intended to overcome obstacles that arise during the implementation of religious counseling.

From the function and utility perspective of communication, communication strategy planning is essential for the effectiveness of Hindu religious counseling. Communication planning and strategy can be used for many purposes, such as implementing programs to be achieved—whether it is disseminating information, being persuasive, educational, marketing, or building the self-image of religious instructors so that their existence is well accepted by society. Technically, in planning the communication strategy for Hindu religious counseling, it involves determining the speaker, the message or material to be delivered in the counseling, the medium through which the message is conveyed, and assessing the effects or impacts of the counseling so that it can be well received. According to Lasswell's communication theory (Ruliana, 2019: 9):

“The best way to explain the communication process is to answer the questions: Who, Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, With What Effect?” (Poppy Ruliana, Puji Lestari, 2019: 9).

Based on the above quotation, it can be explained that a broader definition of the communication process involves identifying who is speaking, what message is being conveyed, to whom the message is delivered, as well as the channel or mass media used and the general objectives or impact of communication. What is conveyed, broadcasted, or published by Hindu religious instructors has already been justified within the community. This is the initial step in structuring religious counseling programs, which will be further elaborated as follows:

2.1 Hindu Religious Instructors as Sources

Hindu religious instructors at the Ministry of Religion of Denpasar City play a very strategic role in building the mental, moral, *sraddha*, and *bhakti* of the Hindu community, as well as in enhancing the quality of Hindu religious life and the development of Hindu human resources. The importance of planning communication strategy is based on the primary role of a Hindu religious

instructor as the frontline in Hindu religious counseling and community guidance activities. This needs to be well-structured before the counseling activities take place.

A Hindu religious instructor is a public figure for their community. Their personality reflects their daily attitudes and behavior. A religious instructor must have a positive image both physically and spiritually, as they serve as a role model for the community (Suhardana, 2008).

Legally and formally, in executing communication strategy functions for Hindu religious counseling, the Ministry of Religion Office does not coordinate with the *Parisadha Hindu Dharma Indonesia* (PHDI) or the Traditional Village Assembly (*Majelis Desa Adat*). However, in performing religious counseling duties, each institution has its own functions, roles, and responsibilities that are interrelated in serving the community, particularly in religious and welfare matters. According to an interview with Marheni on June 17, 2020:

“The Ministry of Religion, the Traditional Village Assembly, and PHDI are aligned, each with its own main duties and functions. PHDI issues religious directives/legalizations, the Ministry of Religion disseminates them to the public, and the Traditional Village Assembly mobilizes the community.”

From the above statement, it can be concluded that if rules and legal frameworks are to be established and provided to the Hindu community, PHDI issues the legal aspects, while the Ministry of Religion is responsible for disseminating religious-related regulations to the public. Meanwhile, the community falls under the jurisdiction of the Traditional Village Assembly. Although their main functions differ, they work in harmony to provide religious counseling and guidance to the community, according to their respective duties (Suhardi, 2018).

The Hindu population in Denpasar City totals 675,724 people, while the Ministry of Religion's Office in Denpasar City has only 6 functional (civil servant) religious instructors and 60 non-civil servant religious instructors.

If calculated, a significant number of Hindu community members in Denpasar City remain unserved by religious counseling. According to the Head of the Religious Affairs Section:

“Civil servant religious instructors serve approximately 360 people, with 6 instructors overseeing 20 guidance groups, each consisting of 30 people. Using the same calculation, non-civil servant religious instructors serve 36,000 Hindus. Therefore, in conclusion, there is a shortage of religious instructors.” (Interview with Dayuh, June 16, 2020).

From the interview findings above, it can be concluded that there is a shortage of religious instructors as the main source for religious counseling and guidance to the Hindu community in Denpasar City. Even though additional religious teachings are provided by religious figures through direct spiritual guidance at Griyas (traditional Hindu religious houses) or by academic figures and Hindu community institutions such as PHDI (Sukabawa, 2017), the presence of Hindu religious instructors must be well-recognized and accepted by the community to fulfill the public's spiritual needs and religious practice guidance. This is further reinforced by a statement from the Head of the Ministry of Religion Office in Denpasar City, based on an interview on June 17, 2020:

“If we rely solely on the Ministry of Religion's religious instructors, honestly, we cannot serve everyone. However, if all our religious instructors were professionals and competent like senior religious figures, it might be enough. But because the recruited personnel are mostly young individuals rather than senior figures, they are not yet fully prepared to directly engage with the community.”

The statement above concludes that the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of Denpasar City still lacks professional or competent religious counselors as resource persons to provide religious guidance and counseling services to the community. However, the government has its own target to train young individuals as future successors to replace the older figures (Sukrawati, 2018). These figures serve as role

models, and people seek knowledge through books or media appearances. Similar to admiring artists, they pursue figures who become their role models in carrying out their duties.

The current situation poses a challenge for counselors to develop communication strategies in their roles as *dharma duta* or *dharmapracharaka*. The planning of resource persons or communicators positions the Coordinator of Counselors (Korluh) as the primary counselor who is always ready to provide guidance. The Coordinator of Counselors (Korluh) is required to always be prepared and responsive in providing counseling resource persons. This is based on the position and role of the Coordinator of Counselors, who is responsible for coordinating the work and activities of counselors in the field while also being seen as one of the counselors with sufficient knowledge and competence.

The role of the Hindu Counselor Coordinator at the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of Denpasar City is deemed crucial in guiding the community to enhance their understanding of Hindu teachings. The Korluh is expected to deliver materials when the counselors under their leadership lack the competence to dissect or elaborate on a topic. Additionally, the Coordinator of Counselors must be prepared to step in when a counselor assigned to a specific area is unable to conduct counseling (Swandewi, 2017).

The planning of resource persons in counseling functions directly positions the Head of the Hindu Religious Affairs Section at the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of Denpasar City as the leader of counselors who is always ready to provide recommendations and counseling. The Head of the Hindu Religious Affairs Section is considered to have extensive knowledge of Hinduism and possesses full authority to manage both the Coordinator of Counselors and other counselors. The Hindu Religious Affairs Section is responsible for coordinating the performance and activities of counselors in the field. Thus, when the Coordinator of Counselors or other counselors are unable to

provide counseling, the Head of the Hindu Religious Affairs Section is always ready to go into the field to enlighten or counsel the community.

The selection of resource persons is based on the conditions and themes raised in the field. A counselor, as a resource person in face-to-face counseling sessions, has the opportunity to choose among different types of speeches, as outlined by Jalaludin Rahmat (2009:17) in a collection of lecture materials on Dharma Wacana Techniques by Drs. I B. Supriadi, M.Si., as follows: there are four (4) types of speeches in religious counseling: (1) impromptu; a speech delivered without prior preparation, immediately responding when asked, (2) manuscript; where the counselor prepares and reads the script from beginning to end, (3) memoriter; where a speech/script is written, then memorized word for word, and (4) extempore; where the counseling material is prepared in the form of an outline and key points but not memorized word for word. The outline serves as a guide to organize ideas in the counselor's mind as a resource person.

Research conducted at the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of Denpasar City reveals that the most frequently used types of speeches in religious counseling for the community are extempore and impromptu speeches. Before conducting counseling, the counselor as a resource person prepares the script and discusses it with the Head of the Hindu Religious Affairs Section or the Coordinator of Counselors, as well as other counselors. Only then is an outline created and presented to the counseling participants. In some cases, sudden requests arise, such as during a diksa ceremony, where the counselor from the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of Denpasar City is asked to be a resource person in religious counseling. This is a recommendation from the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of Denpasar City to maintain the quality of counselors as educators who provide enlightenment to the Hindu community.

The community (the Hindu followers) sometimes has specific topics they wish to address through guidance from counselors in the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of

Denpasar City. Therefore, certain requirements must be met by a counselor acting as a resource person. These requirements include: (1) physical health (physically and mentally fit), (2) ethical and moral integrity, as counselors are public figures and should serve as role models in practicing the principles of tri kaya parisudha, (3) mental and spiritual qualifications, (4) adequate basic knowledge and broad insight into the Vedas and its teachings, Religious Studies, Languages, Hindu Law/Customary Law, Sociology of Religion, Psychology of Religion, among others. Additionally, the counselor's own talents, such as singing (megending), free speech (mebebasan), humor, bondres (traditional Balinese comedic performances), etc., are also considered (Titib, 2011).

To avoid new arising issues, careful planning and consideration are required to select counselors as resource persons according to the standard qualifications of the subject matter. Evaluation and analysis of counselors' competencies are conducted to ensure their ability to deliver materials effectively in the field. Recommendations from the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of Denpasar City (Head of the Hindu Religious Affairs Section or Coordinator of Counselors) are also needed to ensure that the counseling materials align with the established standards set by Parisadha. A counselor as a resource person must prepare themselves to deliver messages or conduct counseling effectively by identifying the issues and needs of the community. They should select topics and objectives, especially when the counseling participants have not predetermined a topic. The counselor should formulate a title and determine objectives. Counselors are expected to provide counseling messages that are relevant and problem-solving. This will make the solution valuable and engaging for the participants of the religious counseling, namely the Hindu community in Denpasar City (Trisnayati, 2018). Counselors analyze the characteristics of the community, then seek sources/literature as reference materials to be presented in the field. According to the following statement:

"A communicator needs to analyze the

difficulties in identifying community problems, which are generally caused by cultural, psychological factors, and others. The communicator must first understand what will be conveyed and what is expected by the audience" (Nurhadi, 2017: 93).

The above statement asserts that counselors, as resource persons, will respond to community requests for guidance through religious counseling submitted to the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of Denpasar City. The counselor studies the characteristics of the community, then seeks sources/literature as reference materials to be delivered in the field. This is part of the communication strategy employed by counselors to conduct effective counseling activities, as explained by Sutriani, a functional counselor:

"My strategy in providing counseling on *bebantenan* in the community is, first, I look for sources, the *bebantenan* references that will be used in the field. After obtaining the sources, I study them, then discuss them with the Head of the Hindu Religious Affairs Section. Once approval is given, it is shared with the community." (Interview, Sutriani, May 28, 2020)

The planning of resource persons in religious counseling demands the activeness and courage of both functional and non-civil servant (Non-PNS) Hindu religious counselors. Non-PNS Hindu religious counselors are professionals with specific expertise and are appointed by the Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of Denpasar City through a work contract. These counselors assist PNS counselors and are assigned to designated sub-districts. This strategy directly encourages and pushes Non-PNS Hindu religious counselors to be capable of providing religious counseling to the Hindu community.

Planning primarily involves management aspects, whereas the concept of communication is a process of disseminating or exchanging information. Although these concepts are different, when a religious instructor serves as a speaker, they can integrate both aspects in carrying out their duties in the field. This aligns

with the statement by Putra (interview, May 27, 2018), a Non-Civil Servant Hindu religious instructor assigned to the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office in Denpasar City, who stated:

"The speaker for the counseling or guidance is adjusted to the conditions, Madam. First, we prepare the source or ourselves as instructors, as it is our duty. We are responsible for determining the necessary materials and what should be conveyed to the community in our assigned areas."

The statement above indicates that the planning of speakers encourages the productivity of all Hindu religious guidance officials. Proper planning regarding speakers for religious counseling involves all Hindu guidance components, ensuring they are prepared and capable of providing enlightenment to the community. Thus, well-structured planning of counseling speakers supports the existence of religious instructors, who are regarded as the front line in strengthening the understanding of Hinduism. The demand for professionalism and responsibility in carrying out religious counseling duties often becomes a requirement for Hindu religious instructors. These instructors and the community face complex challenges and issues in their daily lives, particularly in preparing future generations and maintaining religious tolerance. The performance of Hindu religious instructors is assessed based on their output. Therefore, as spiritual guides, instructors must be supported by comprehensive regulations and adequate infrastructure to enable various innovations and breakthroughs in religious counseling while avoiding the emergence of new problems.

The planning of Hindu religious instructors as speakers is realized by preparing skilled and knowledgeable instructors. Since the community often selects specific topics they wish to address through the guidance of religious instructors in the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office in Denpasar City, the institution ensures that instructors meet the required qualifications. This is done by providing extensive training and cognitive

preparation, allowing instructors to quickly address the issues presented by the community. In line with an interview with Marheni on June 17, 2020, she stated:

"To ensure that religious instructors are well-accepted by the community, they are first trained through mental and skill-building exercises. Institutions frequently collaborating for counseling include LP Kerobokan and the regional police department. This practice helps instructors develop mental resilience, allowing them to remain composed while delivering religious counseling."

The statement above explains that religious instructors are continuously given opportunities to train as speakers, focusing on mental and skill development until they are fully prepared. For instance, they may choose materials from *Sarasamuccaya* related to ethical life, or from the *Bhagavad Gita* regarding *yajña*, depending on the topic they wish to explore. If they choose to take references from the *Puranas*, they must first undergo training before conducting counseling sessions in correctional facilities.

2.2 Counseling Messages (Massage)

Messages in counseling guidance are also planned or well-designed. The messages that become the topic of counseling are first selected through careful planning and can cover several issues in the field. Borrowing the opinion of Cangara (2017:37), it can be said that:

"The messages conveyed can be either verbal or nonverbal (written or spoken language). Messages that have been structured in a plan will later be delivered to the community while adhering to the principles of communication strategy and adaptation (adjustment) in the field."

The formulation of religious counseling messages follows five sequential motifs: attention, need, satisfaction, visualization, and action. The communication strategy in message planning, in the forms of redundancy (repetition), informative, persuasive, educational, or entertaining approaches, facilitates counselors in delivering messages. According to data obtained from an interview with the Head of the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Denpasar City, Marheni

stated:

"Messages are conveyed repeatedly but with different methods so that the community as message recipients do not get bored. The topic remains the same, but the counseling method varies, making the community more receptive to the counseling material." (Interview, Marheni, June 17, 2020).

For example, the topic of Hindu Religious Ethics taken from the *Sarasamuccaya* sloka is delivered in the form of performing arts under a work program called SEJUK (performing arts). Then, it is presented using the *dharma gita* method by reading slokas, although the title remains the same. Thus, Hindu religious counselors repeatedly deliver the same topic using different methods, which provides a new experience for the recipients.

Message planning determines the effectiveness of knowledge transformation among the community. Well-structured and well-designed messages facilitate the public in understanding the knowledge and experiences delivered by counselors. Quoting from the lecture material "Basic Concepts of Dharma Wacana" (Supriadi, 2018:4-5), a good topic is determined based on the following criteria:

"(a) The topic must align with the counselor's knowledge background, (b) the topic must interest the counselor/source, (c) the topic must interest the communicant/audience, (d) the topic must have clear scope and discussion, (e) the topic must suit the time and situation, (f) the topic must be supported by other materials."

The messages conveyed must align with Hindu religious teachings. These messages are then transformed through a process of planning Hindu religious counseling. This is done by examining the religious situation in the field and analyzing it with relevant Hindu scriptures. The information is then transformed by Hindu religious counselors to the community through the implementation of religious counseling, thereby stimulating the community and deepening their faith regarding the authenticity of religious scriptures (Vedic teachings) in relation to their current life conditions.

A well-constructed Hindu religious counseling message aims to enhance the community's faith (*sraddha*). This is carried out by assessing religious situations in the field and analyzing them with relevant Hindu scriptures, ensuring that the community becomes more stimulated and deepens their belief in the authenticity of religious scriptures (divine teachings) in relation to their contemporary life conditions.

The transformation of Hindu religious teachings used for community counseling at the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Denpasar City follows the Sad Dharma method. This method is implemented to instill Hindu religious values into the hearts of the community so that these values become an integral part of their lives. Behavior that reflects the noble values of religious teachings will bring happiness to both physical and spiritual life. This aligns with the statement by Dayuh (interview, May 28, 2020), Head of the Hindu Religious Affairs Section at the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Denpasar City:

"Counselors serve the community using models or forms that align with Hindu teachings through the Sad Dharma method, which includes *dharmasadhana*, *dharmagita*, *dharmayatra*, *dharmawacana*, *dharmatula*, and *dharmasanti*, plus an additional face-to-face method in the form of individual or group consultations."

The delivery of religious material, as mentioned above, uses a comparative (mixed) language style. This aims to minimize misunderstandings or a lack of comprehension of any language used in counseling. However, proper language etiquette is still observed, even if it cannot always be fully received by the public. Nonetheless, efforts continue, as expressed in an interview with Putra on May 20, 2020:

"Sometimes, various languages are used, including national and international languages, while the mother tongue must be preserved. Without this, we will not understand global developments, so at a minimum, three languages are used."

This means that there must be respect and appreciation, sometimes using humor or jokes to create space for better acceptance in society.

The delivery of messages aims to explain the meanings embedded in religious symbols. To clarify explanations, strengthen messages, enhance appeal, and facilitate understanding, counselors should know how to develop discussion points. Some techniques in discussion development for counselors as speakers include: (a) Explanation – The entire discourse consists of explanations, which should be complemented by supporting information. (b) Examples – Detailed stories, also known as illustrations, help in understanding abstract concepts. (c) Analogy – Comparing two or more things to highlight similarities or differences. (d) Testimony – Statements from experts quoted to support counseling material. (e) Statistics – Numerical data used to show case comparisons in specific categories. (f) Repetition – Reiterating the same idea multiple times using different words. Besides strengthening faith, religious material also aims to reinforce the ethical and ceremonial aspects of Hinduism. Counselors also strive to provide stimulus to encourage participants to improve their religious practices, as expressed in the following interview:

"Counselors must provide stimulus or motivation to the community by incorporating relevant and crucial issues that are highly beneficial for them. Such stimulus triggers people to engage in the subject matter and take action based on the counselor's guidance." (Interview, Dayuh, May 28, 2020).

The steps in planning the message/material begin with discussions to ensure that the material is well-prepared and that the instructors are ready for field implementation. The preparation of religious materials is adjusted to the characteristics of the recipients/communicants. Therefore, some materials are structured based on the age of the communicants, while others are designed according to gender, and even the profession of the communicants.

The *Tri Kerangka Dasar Agama Hindu* (Three Fundamental Frameworks of Hinduism) contains different areas of knowledge. The *Tattwa* aspect elaborates more on the

philosophical side of Hinduism, while the Susila aspect emphasizes moral conduct in religious practice. Meanwhile, the Acara aspect focuses on the implementation of rituals. These three fundamental frameworks serve as the basis for constructing Hindu religious counseling materials that will be delivered to the community. Hindu religious instructors, as spiritual guides, must actively engage in every religious counseling and guidance activity in society. Alit, the coordinator of religious instructors at the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office in Denpasar City, stated the following:

"The community has diverse conditions; they tend to request practical guidance, which still dominates. The most common requests include instructions on making *banten otonan*, *ayaban*, *banten odalan*. For youth groups (*sekehe teruna*), they often seek guidance on *making kelakat*, *sanggah cucuk*, *dharma gita*, *yoga*, and in certain areas, even the development of *sekehe santi* groups." (Interview with Alit, June 22, 2020).

The preparation of religious materials based on the *Tri Kerangka Dasar Agama Hindu* is adjusted to the participants of the counseling sessions. Therefore, some materials are structured based on the participants' age, while others are tailored according to gender or even profession. The delivery of messages also aims to explain the meanings embedded within religious symbols. Furthermore, the instructors make efforts to provide stimuli to encourage participants to improve their religious practice.

2.3 Message Delivery Tools (Channel)

Counselors also plan message delivery tools by utilizing electronic communication in their counseling efforts. Message delivery through electronic communication among counselors tends to be personal, using social media for communication, consultation, and coordination. Consultation and coordination occur between counselors and between counselors and community leaders in their areas. The commonly used social media platforms include WhatsApp, email, websites, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. According to Dayuh (interview, May 28, 2020):

"The way to obtain counseling guidance

from the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Denpasar City follows a strategy called POLA (Online Religious Service), available on the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Denpasar City website."

Counseling messages are also planned for mass media. The working group of counselors (*Pokjalah*) at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Denpasar City collaborates with national television stations like TVRI and RRI to deliver religious messages to a broader audience. Borrowing Valdiani's (2016:88) opinion:

"To achieve this, counselors make various efforts to provide up-to-date and engaging information about Hindu religious life. Counseling planning through mass media showcases innovation in utilizing modern media (digitalization)."

Modern mass media serve as a tool for broad audience engagement, reaching not only Denpasar City but the entire world. During the COVID-19 pandemic, religious counseling was conducted virtually. Mass communication functions more extensively compared to interpersonal or group communication in face-to-face counseling.

Several short videos have been produced to enlighten the community during the pandemic. Hindu religious counselors at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Denpasar City have enthusiastically practiced Yoga Asana tutorials for health education via social media while adhering to health protocols. Videos can be accessed at [YouTube link], and more digital counseling content is available on various online platforms (websites, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and television).

2.4 Message Recipients (Communicants)

Regarding this matter, Hindu religious instructors at the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office in Denpasar City have several target message recipients. The primary recipients of the counseling sessions are the Hindu community within Denpasar City under the jurisdiction of the Bendesa Adat Pakraman. This is based on the duty area of the Hindu religious instructors at the Ministry of

Religious Affairs Office in Denpasar, which covers the administrative region of Denpasar City. The Hindu community in East Denpasar is served by 16 Hindu religious instructors, South Denpasar by 17 instructors, West Denpasar by 16 instructors, and North Denpasar by 17 instructors.

The planning of message recipients in Denpasar City is based on the sociological aspects of the community. The implementation of counseling, whether face-to-face or virtual, first involves studying or evaluating the sociological characteristics of the Hindu community in Denpasar City. This is considered an essential aspect that must be taken into account before conducting counseling sessions. Given that the people of Denpasar City have diverse sociological characteristics, this must be carefully assessed. According to an interview, Dayuh stated:

"The characteristics of Denpasar City's community are diverse. Some still belong to rural categories with strong adherence to traditions. There are also different age groups, such as youth, the elderly, and office workers. The community is very multicultural and highly heterogeneous." (Interview with Dayuh, May 28, 2020).

Referring to the interview excerpt above, understanding and approaching different sociological characteristics are crucial. Differences in characteristics indicate variations in perspectives, even leading to different reactions to the content of counseling sessions. The manner of delivering materials must be adapted to the city's community characteristics. Achieving harmony and unity will ultimately facilitate the delivery of messages to counseling participants.

Understanding community characteristics, as planned in determining the communicants, is fundamentally part of a community empowerment strategy. Empowerment aims to address weaknesses within the community. In this context, empowerment in Hindu religious counseling is about addressing knowledge gaps and religious attitudes within the community (Valdiani, 2016).

The planning of counseling participants (face-to-face sessions) also includes Hindu traditional

institutions and religious organizations within Denpasar City. Religious institutions are not only sought out by the instructors as audiences, but sometimes these institutions themselves request counseling sessions from the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office in Denpasar City to strengthen their organizations. Furthermore, Dayuh (Interview, May 28, 2020) stated:

"In the community, there are various religious organizations such as *sekahe santi*, *serati banten*, *pamangku groups*, *seka truna*, *Peradah*, *KMHDI*, and *Prajaniti*. There are also *Dharma Wanita* groups, *sekahe gong*, and other social groups that often request *Dharma Wacana* sessions."

Apart from Hindu organizations, counseling participants also come from government institutions. Hindu religious instructors at the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office in Denpasar City are often appointed as speakers for spiritual guidance programs for employees and officials within the Denpasar government. Dayuh (Interview, May 28, 2020) further stated:

"In some government institutions, we also provide guidance, including in correctional facilities (prisons) and regional police detention centers. There are many different social characteristics within these communities."

The planning of counseling participants also includes administrative preparations. Participants are required to complete certain administrative documents before the sessions take place. These documents serve as reports compiled by the instructors (speakers). This administrative aspect is one of the technical requirements for data collection and completeness in counseling administration.

2.5 Effects (Response)

The community has its own response to both the quality of the instructors and the content of the counseling sessions. Therefore, instructors must design various aspects to foster a positive response to these activities. A response is a reaction shown by an individual or group when the influencing factors are met. In an interview, Alit, the coordinator of the instructors, stated:

"The response after counseling sessions

varies. Some are enthusiastic, while others remain indifferent. Enthusiastic participants ask a lot of questions, whereas those who are indifferent may stay or leave before the session ends."

This statement is reinforced by Dayuh, who described the community's response to the counseling sessions:

"Any response or criticism from the community after the counseling sessions is an essential part of the evaluation process. It serves as input for improving future counseling sessions."

To foster a positive response, the process is managed by planning the delivery of material, analyzing the content according to relevant scriptures, and ensuring that the material serves as the primary stimulus for effective responses. A good communication strategy is essential in delivering messages to the community to elicit a positive and effective response. In conclusion, engaging with the community to provide Hindu religious counseling is both a challenge and an enriching experience for Hindu religious instructors in Denpasar City.

IV. CONCLUSION

The communication strategies employed include redundancy (repetitive), informative, persuasive, educational, and entertaining techniques. The planning of communication strategies by Hindu religious instructors at the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office in Denpasar City encompasses aspects such as selecting instructors as speakers, planning messages, choosing communication channels, identifying counseling participants, and analyzing the effects (responses).

When calculated, the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office in Denpasar City is actually short on Hindu religious instructors, as the current 66 instructors are insufficient to serve the entire Hindu population in the city. Furthermore, not all Hindu religious instructors in Denpasar City are skilled in communication strategies, as many recruits are young and inexperienced, making them less proficient in engaging with the community directly. A long learning process is required to develop professional and proficient instructors.

Additionally, some instructors have not fully

implemented communication strategies effectively, as some segments of the community reject the materials due to social and cultural barriers. Counseling materials are developed based on the needs of the participants or upon request from the community. Planning in terms of communication channels is realized by selecting the necessary devices or media for counseling and expediting coordination efforts. The participants of counseling sessions or message recipients are the Hindu community of Denpasar City. A positive response is planned through structured management, including careful planning of speakers, material preparation, counseling objectives, content delivery, and community justification.

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