

Research Article

Digital Mediation in Interfaith Dialogue: Advancing Christian-Islamic Unity in the Modern Age

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Abstract.

Interfaith dialogue is crucial in a diverse country like Indonesia, where misunderstandings often arise among religious followers. Such misunderstandings have sometimes led to religiously motivated conflicts. Effective interreligious communication can mitigate these issues. While there are inherent creedal differences, mutual understanding is key to fostering peaceful relationships between religious groups. This study aims to delve deep into the intricacies of interreligious communication. One significant problem is the communication gap between religious communities, which can escalate tensions. Recent studies suggest that disputes often arise from misinterpretations of one religion's teachings by members of another faith, driven by their own theological perspectives. Experts advocate for interreligious communication as a pathway to religious moderation. This research uses a YouTube video from Deddy Corbuzier's channel, featuring dialogues between Leonardo (Onad), Habib Jafar, and Pastor Yerry Pattinasarani, to explore the nuances of communication between Islam and Protestant Christianity, the two predominant religions in Indonesia. The study will focus on two main aspects: a content analysis to understand the communication patterns, and a philosophical examination of the theological discourse. By leveraging digital media, this research hopes to promote a contemporary form of religious moderation, inspiring the youth to bridge religious divides and prevent future conflicts.

Keywords: Islam, interreligious, Christian, digital, communication

1. Introduction

Interfaith dialogue is one of the keys in nurturing diversity in Indonesia [1]. Several surveys that have been conducted in the past five years have stated that there are rampant incidents of intolerance between religious communities, some even develop into conflicts whose root cause is the lack of interfaith dialogue that fosters religious moderation.

Religious moderation itself in general is an attitude to respect and understand different groups or people in religion [2,3]. As a country that has seven official religions

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recognized by the government, namely Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and religions and streams of belief, interfaith interaction can no longer be avoided. Of the six religions, Islam and Christianity (in general Catholicism can also be included because of the similarity of theological foundations) have the same roots but differ in theological terms. This is usually often prone to misunderstanding and often results in horizontal conflicts in Indonesia [4,1]. Call it the riots that occurred in Poso and Papua involving these two major religions [5]. The real misconception is the lack of interfaith communication created. Interfaith meeting rooms have been eroded into exclusive spaces filled only by internal religious studies without involving discussions of followers of other religions. On some occasions it can be seen that often internal lectures contain exclusive content that justifies one's own religion by blaming others [6]. This then makes religious believers forget that they interact in a state life with the spirit of Bhineka Tunggal Ika.

The phenomenon of religion cannot be separated from the exclusivity of the claims of the single truth of religion. No religion can "agree" with the truth of another religion at this level. However, this is what needs to be distinguished because religious believers live in two spaces, namely religious space, and state space. In the context of religious space, it can indeed be said that there is no compromise term with creed, but on the other hand there is a state space that allows to live together even though they are different. In Islam itself this is called *ukhuwah basyariah* which is the relationship between human beings and in Christianity itself it is called the law of love-to-love fellow human beings as yourself. These two things often lack a place in religious teaching delivered by religious leaders. They are sometimes busier always looking for differences that exist in religion. Research from Setara institute found that there is a tendency to understand Gen Z who tend to be intolerant due to receiving exclusive religious teachings and not wanting to open to other religions [7].

This symptom of intolerance should not be underestimated. This issue is no longer personal but has also been communal [10]. Religious people tend to be individuals who cannot accept others and reject the existence of others who do not share their religion. Examples are symptoms of rejection of tombs, residences, and so on [8,9].

One of the efforts to minimize these negative things is to build religious discussions. As we know that from elementary school to college, religious content is always delivered exclusively, for example by separating students' lessons according to their respective religions, without ever holding discussions between them. In addition, the content of religious lessons that contain problems of interfaith harmony in them is very small,

less than 10% of the total existing lessons [10]. Some of these conditions then further exacerbate the absence of interfaith dialogue spaces available.

Technological advances that occurred in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. Interfaith communication spaces should no longer become closed and hardened, given the ease of digital advancement. But what happens sometimes is just the opposite, often in the digital age, the production of hateful speech and provocative religious content is often reproduced repeatedly. The content that is usually produced is usually around religious comparisons between Islam and Christianity. In this case, what is often a problem is the understanding of creed in “capturing” the phenomenon of Godhead. Islam and Christianity have different understandings of divinity. This is often a “stumbling block” in building dialogue between the two people, which is then exacerbated by the stereotype that people of other religions outside their religion are the wrong people.

At this point, efforts are needed to build interreligious dialogue by countering provocative content with the production of positive content that builds theological interreligious dialogue. One of the contents that builds on this is a video from Deddy Corbuzier’s channel hosted by Leonardo Onadio (Onad) and Habib Jafar Husein (Habib Jafar) which often contains interfaith discussions. One of the videos used as the object of research in this case study is a video with the title (“Tiga Agama Duduk Barreng, Adu Debat?”) Three Religions Sitting Together, Debate?” [11] (Figure 1). This video was chosen as a form of interfaith communication built in the digital age involving conversations between Catholic Onad, Habib Jafar from Islam, and Pastor Yerry Pattinasarani as a representative of Christian.

Through the video, researchers plan to conduct a detailed content analysis to reveal what meanings are contained in the existing text. In addition, researchers will also capture communication patterns that are carried out in interacting with other religions. In searching for existing content, researchers will use analytical theory, critical discourse analysis from the figure Norman Fairclough. On the other hand, the study also continued with the search for philosophical meanings hidden in the video content.

2. Literature Review

Islam and Christianity are actually rooted in the same theological historical background but differ in religious doctrine, especially on the issue of divinity [12]. This is what then makes interfaith dialogue in Indonesia still leave considerable challenges in Indonesia



Figure 1: Screenshot Video of Three Religions Sitting Together, Debate? Source: (Tiga Agama Duduk Bareng, Debat?, 2023).

[13]. Theological factors related to the concept of truth claims are often the main problem in efforts to build interfaith dialogue [14,15]. The issue of Jesus' position is often a major theme in Islamic-Christian debates, even some radical Islamic groups have used this issue to attack Christian theological concepts by saying that "Jesus is Muslim" [16]. Although this is legitimate because religious truth is an intersubjective truth, raising things that are sensitive and offensive to other religions certainly has the potential to taper existing conflicts [5].

The history of religious conflicts in Indonesia can be said to have expanded in the reform era after the New Order Era. The reform era marked by democracy has made the growth of conservative spirit and radicalism in Islam present to combat non-mainstream movements [17,18]. Data shows that religious conflicts have increased after the reform era, especially related to conflicts between Islam and Christianity [19,20]. In the period from 2007 to 2022, there have been interreligious conflicts with most problems in 140 incidents of destruction and 90 incidents of rejection of houses of worship [21]. This reality is exacerbated by the lack of reconciliation efforts built, both by the government and other parties to seek interfaith discussions to build good relations between the two religions [22].

Research on Islamic-Christian dialogue has been widely conducted, especially in building discussion efforts between the two religions. In several studies it has been found that efforts to build relationships of tolerance between religious people must be

carried out from the level of education. Through education, children are expected to foster a spirit of tolerance through their encounters with other religions [23-25,20]. The results of the study show that the main obstacle to dialogical encounters in the two religions is at least three things, namely the existence of

First, there is an exclusive understanding of religion that is spread through schools. As a result, students do not want to open themselves to interfaith discussions. This is reinforced by a survey from PPM UIN in 2017 which showed that religious education is presented exclusively, intolerantly to make religious understanding misguided [7]. When explored further, indeed this cannot be separated from the understanding of existing teachers or teachers who already hold the principle of narrow exclusivity, one of which is that they do not agree if other religious houses of worship are built in their neighborhoods [17,26].

The second issue is historical. Christians in this case, sometimes get negative stereotypes because Christianity is considered a colonial religion, likes to feast because they like to drink alcohol, and are exiled in identity (because they are not Javanese because they are not Islamic, and neither Caucasians, let alone Chinese) [27]. This certainly has a major effect on the condition of the image built on Christians. Conversely, there are false narratives built by Christians against Muslims, for example, Islam is considered intolerant and cannot coexist with other religions, besides that culturally, Muslims are also narrated as people who are uprooted from Indonesian cultural roots because many adopt Arab culture [28].

The last problem is the existence of a social construction that separates the majority and minority. It is undeniable that after the events of the 2017 DKI Jakarta Governor Election and the 2019 Presidential Election which were boosted with religious issues, there was a tremendous division in society [29,30]. This series of events further clarifies the boundary line between the majority and the minority, and the main use of identity politics [31]. As a result, there is majority domination over minorities as evidenced by several cases of destruction of minority houses of worship (read: Christians) [32].

From various studies that have been conducted, there has been no research that examines interfaith discussions in the digital space. In fact, digital space is a free space that allows for interfaith dialogue to anyone, anytime, and anywhere [33,34]. Research on interfaith dialogue in the digital space is important because of the massive prejudice between religious believers that is increasingly inevitable, especially in followers of Islam and Christianity. This relationship then needs to be bridged in religious discussions

which, although built by prioritizing human aspects, only then can it be possible to build discussions in theological areas. Of course, theological dialogue is not meant to compare or pit who is more right, but to find common ground in order to build religious moderation [35].

3. Methodology Research

This research is qualitative research with the methodological stages of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). There are three stages that must be carried out three-dimensionally, namely: text analysis, discursive practice analysis, and socio-cultural practice analysis. The method of CDA based on Norman Fairclough's thought is indeed known for its three-dimensional approach, namely: text analysis, discursive practice analysis, and socio-cultural practice analysis [36].

Here is a detailed explanation of Critical Discourse Analysis based on Norman Fairclough's thought consists of three interrelated dimensions [36]. The first dimension is Text Analysis, focusing on understanding the structure of text and the formation of meaning within it. In this study, the focus of the study is the texts contained in the video "Three Religions Sit Together, Debate?"

The second dimension, Discursive Practice Analysis (Interpretation), is concerned with the production and consumption of texts. It evaluates how the text is produced, who the producers are, as well as how the text is received and interpreted by the audience. The importance of this dimension is understanding the conventions and norms underlying the production and interpretation of texts. In the dimension, researchers try to explore the role behind the producers of this content along with the meaning received by netizens by analyzing feedback comments from netizens who consume the content [37].

The third dimension is the Analysis of Socio-Cultural Practices (Explanation), which aims at broad social discourse and cognition. This section focuses on the issue that discourse can influence and reflect social structures, including power relations, ideologies, and social norms. This section focuses on how this video can massively influence social discourse on individual understanding in building interfaith dialogue [38].

Fairclough's three-dimensional approach recognizes that discourse is not only limited to texts, but also how they are generated, received, and how they interact with broader

social structures. It provides a powerful framework for understanding the complex relationship between language, power, and ideology [39].

4. Results and Discussion

In this section, we will describe in detail the video analysis “Three Religions Sitting Together, Debate?” using the Critical Discourse Analysis method. In detail, it will be illustrated in Table 1:

TABLE 1: Text Dimensions.

Dimension	Description	Aspects
Text	Text Analysis	<p>Program Name: LOGIN</p> <p>Title: “Tiga Agama Duduk Bareng, Adu Debat?”</p> <p>The words analyzed: “Ukhuwah Insani”, “Truth”, Love, Respect, and “Humanity” signify the focus on brotherhood, truth, and humanity in interreligious conversations.</p> <p>Grammar: The conversation uses clear and explicit sentences, indicating an intention to communicate views and thoughts appropriately. The language used is a daily language in Jakarta’s association.</p> <p>Speech Acts: There are various speech acts such as questions, explanations, testimonies, and statements delivered to each other, Onad dominates in asking questions, while Habib Jafar and Pastor Yeri explain more often about the cases presented.</p>

Source: Data researcher

In the first dimension, namely the text dimension, words such as “Ukhuwah Insani” and “Truth” in the vocabulary reflect the values of brotherhood and truth, indicating the focus of conversation on inter-religious harmony. The name of the program “LOGIN” describes Habib Jafar’s humorous attempt to influence Onad towards Islam. Meanwhile, the title “Three Religions Sit Together, Debate?” indicates debate expectations, but the content shows alternative views on religious tolerance. His grammar using colloquial language reflects the desire to clearly communicate the message to the general audience. Furthermore, the dynamics of the conversation are seen with Onad as the investigator, while Habib Jafar and Pastor Yeri provide explanations, showing the informative structure of the dialogue. The entire text highlights the importance of interfaith harmony and understanding with an accessible and informative approach.

The next dimension is interpretation, which is looking at the producer of the content (see Table 2). This content is produced and broadcast on Dedy Corbuzier’s Channel during Ramadan in 2023 and highlights the topic of inter-religious tolerance. The content is distributed through Youtube with 21 million followers. This reflects the importance and popularity of interreligious dialogue in society. In addition, content owners have a certain

interest in raising this topic because it may be of interest to the community, especially issues related to religion. It is possible that the owner of this content deliberately chose a theme about religious differences in order to get a large number of viewers. This is evident from the number of viewers of this video which reached and has been watched by 3.5 million viewers.

TABLE 2: Dimensions of Interpretation.

Dimension	Description	Aspects
Interpretation	Discursive Practice	<p>Production: This content is on Dedy Corbuzier's channel who is a convert to Islam. This content is presented during Ramadan in 2023. This content is on episode 13. Conversations about tolerance, togetherness, and understanding between religions, demonstrate the importance of these topics in the context of today's society. This is in line with what Pastor Yeri said that there are still many people who view inter-religious meetings as a place for debate to prove their respective truths.</p> <p>Distribution: this content is channeled through a Youtube channel that can be accessed by all levels of society, with a total of 21 million followers. This dialogue seems to be aimed at audiences who want to understand more deeply about interfaith interaction and how it is viewed in the context of everyday life. Consumption: this content has been watched by 3.5 million viewers, liked by 73 thousand people, and has 4 thousand comments. The reader or listener can understand the importance of interfaith dialogue and how differences can be seen as wealth rather than as hindrances, differences only in beliefs. Most comments agreed with the content that diversity is absolute and religious harmony is important</p>

Source: Data Researcher

The last dimension, socio-cultural practice, emphasizes how texts are produced and consumed. These conversations took place in the context of Indonesia's religiously pluralistic society and reflected ongoing efforts to increase interfaith understanding. The ideological and hegemonic effects of this dialogue suggest that inter-religious cooperation and friendship are not only possible but also already in place, counteracting the narrative of conflict that often appears in the media. In detail the explanation of these dimensions can be seen in Table 3.

5. Conclusion

The discourse surrounding interfaith interactions between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia presents a complex and multifaceted challenge. This difficulty is rooted in

TABLE 3: Dimensions of Socio-Cultural Practice Analysis.

Dimension	Description	Aspects
Explanation	Socio-Cultural Practices	<p>Situational Context: Conversations take place in the context of Indonesian society that has diverse religious backgrounds, where interfaith dialogue is important.</p> <p>Socio-Historical Context: This dialogue reflects ongoing efforts within society to build bridges between different religions and understand each better.</p> <p>Ideological and Hegemonic Effects: The dialogue shows how both figures attempt to show that friendship and cooperation between religions is possible and already exists. They try to counteract narratives of conflict and disagreement often seen in media representations of interfaith interaction. In the comment section in this video also shows that the community agrees with the content conveyed by the content.</p>

a confluence of factors, including insufficient governmental support, limited doctrinal understanding, and entrenched social constructs delineating majority and minority religious groups. Addressing these issues necessitates a holistic approach that systematically tackles each of these contributing elements.

A potential solution to foster interfaith dialogue can be initiated at the individual level. In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, coupled with the increasing prevalence of digital media in Indonesia, there exists an opportunity to cultivate discourse within digital spaces. These digital platforms offer not only ease and efficacy but also the potential to introduce novel perspectives about religious adherents who have been marginalized or overlooked by educational institutions and familial settings due to religious disparities.

While not without its limitations, the content of the interfaith discussion video titled “Tiga Agama Duduk Bersama, Adu Debat?” featuring Onad, Habib Jafar, and Pastor Yerry, exemplifies a constructive model for interfaith dialogue. This study reveals that the crux of the issue in Islamic-Christian interactions lies in the absence of both personal and theological discourse. ‘Personal’ in this context refers to the development of mutual familiarity and understanding, while ‘theological’ denotes engaging in dialogues that seek to comprehend the perspectives of other religions based on their own theological frameworks, rather than interpretations filtered through the lens of one’s own religious beliefs. By fostering such comprehensive and empathetic dialogues, it is conceivable to establish harmonious relations between these two religious’ communities.

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