



The Role of Social Media for Islam in Multicultural Society in Bali During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract:

This study aims to determine the extent to which Islam uses social media to disseminate information about religion, especially during the pandemic in Bali, in multicultural societies in particular, and Indonesia in general, which experience restrictions on worship. Bali is an area with a multicultural society; how can religious leaders and the government work together to convince people to comply with health protocols and not abandon their worship according to established Islamic teachings? This study uses historical heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and heuristics using sources from journals, books, and interviews with Islamic religious leaders and Muslims in Bali. The results of the study revealed that religious leaders and Muslims in Bali made good use of social media facilities to continue carrying out their worship during the pandemic. Although initially there was resistance, in the end, they accepted and made social media a means of learning for the future.

Keywords: Islamic; social media; multicultural; pandemic

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology today undeniably significantly impacts human life in the social, economic, political, and even cultural fields. The culture developed in the digital revolution 5.0 requires humans to keep up with the times, namely the age of digital technology. This seems to have begun to be glimpsed and used by the community, both religious leaders and content creators, to create Islamic content interspersed with da'wah that can be accepted by millennials who use digital technology in daily life interactions.

However, with social media, the spread of hoax news cannot be avoided due to the lack of literacy by content creators and netizens as social media users. The use of social media experienced a significant increase during the Covid-19 pandemic. This happened due to the imposition of restrictions on community activities, one of which is worshipping in houses of worship such as mosques, churches, temples, monasteries, and temples. This is stated in the Minister of Religion Circular Letter Number 1 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of the Covid-19 Handling Protocol in Houses of Worship and Minister of



Religion Circular Letter Number 6 of 2020 concerning Guidelines for Worship in the Month of Ramadan.

Research on the role of social media, especially during the pandemic, is an interesting thing to discuss, such as what has been published in a book entitled *Viruses, Humans and God Interfaith Reflections on Covid-19* Editor of Dicky Sofyan and Mohhammad Wildan (Sofyan, 2021) then there is the *Simki Economic* journal with the title *The Role of Social Media During the Pandemic for Economic Progress in Society* (Risnawati, 2021) and an article entitled *Islamic Views on the Utilization of Social Media*" in the *Journal of Informatics* (Aksin, 2016).

However, no one has specifically discussed the role of social media during the co-19 pandemic in Bali. Therefore, the author is interested in discussing several problems, among others: 1. How was the beginning of the arrival of Islam to Bali? 2. How is the implementation of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha during the covid-19 pandemic in Bali, 3. What is the role of social media for Muslims during the covid-19 pandemic in Bali?

These problems are interesting to discuss with the scope of research in Bali and take the temporal scup during the arrival of Muslims as a background and when the covid-19 pandemic occurred in Bali in 2020-2022.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tobroni's research in the *Journal of Komunikasi Hukum* discusses the concept of religious restrictions in human rights law and religious restrictions in handling covid-19 in terms of human rights instruments. Restrictions on activities can only be in the freedom of external forums and precise interpretation, which is not discriminatory and does not have implications for negating rights. Tobroni also concluded that restrictions on religious activities in Indonesia have a strong foundation in terms of human rights instruments and are contained in the Law, have been arranged strictly and clearly, are not discriminatory, rights are fulfilled, and are comparable between objectives and mechanisms. (Tobroni, 2020). This research is a reference for future research regarding human rights law in Indonesia.

The following literature review is entitled "Preferensi Penggunaan Media Sosial terhadap Keberagaman Remaja." Ruspitasari revealed that the use of social media is



related to the religious maturity and religious commitment of adolescents. Social media used include WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. Teenagers vary in the level of religious maturity and religiosity commitment. This condition is in accordance with Uses and Gratification, which is a selective agent user in determining the use of social media as a reference (Retpitasari, 2020, p.17). The results of his research are a reference that adolescents are closely related to social media, and their use is in accordance with religious maturity.

RESEARCH METHOD

The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach. According to Denzin and Lincoln 1987, qualitative research uses a natural setting to interpret phenomena that occur by involving various existing methods (Moleong, 2021, p.5). In this case, the phenomenon of restrictions on worship in mosques during the Covid-19 pandemic and the rampant use of social media. The research method is by analyzing documents of Decrees and Circulars from the Central Government and Regional Governments, then literature studies of journals on the role of social media and religion and the co-19 pandemic, and observations at mosques in Bali. The data collection techniques include distributing questionnaires to Islamic students at the Faculty of Humanities, Udayana University. The data analysis technique is based on in-depth interviews, observation notes with informants and sources (Moleong, 2021, p.36).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Early Arrival of Muslims in Bali

In the multicultural Balinese society, Muslims in Bali are historically estimated to have existed since the 15th century during the Gelgel Kingdom, followed by the entry of Javanese, Sasak, Madurese, and Arab tribes. The arrival of the Islamic community from outside the island of Bali was well received by the Balinese as brothers, so they were referred to as *nyama selam*. The arrival of Muslims in Bali also led to intense social interaction (Ardhana, 2011, p.5).

The presence of Muslim merchants from outside Bali on the coast in the early days of Islam was considered an honor, so many people were even interested in marrying merchants from Arabia. This was also the case in Bali. Intense interaction between *Nyama*

Hindu and *Nyama* Islam resulted in mutual integration, so the concept of *nyama* Bali and *nyama Selam* is a form of cultural acceptance in Bali (Pageh, 2013, p.241).

Until 2021 there were 423,000 people, or 10 percent of the total population in Bali, which amounted to 4.3 million. Originating from religious tribes in Indonesia, precisely from Java and Lombok, because the island of Bali is located between these two large islands. Many settlements inhabited by Muslims are in the Gelgel Village area of Klungkung Regency, Loloan Village of Jembrana Regency, Kecicang Village in Karangasem Regency, and Pegayaman Village of Buleleng Regency. In Bali, there are 765 units of places of worship for Muslims consisting of 515 units of musala, and 250 units of mosques spread almost throughout the capital city of the regency, even to remote villages in Bali (BPS Bali Province, 2010).

Islamic settlements are not only in coastal areas but also up to the mountains. The coastal area became an Islamic settlement because it was a trading location that became a place for buying and selling transactions of traders from outside Bali Island, such as from Java, Madura, Arab, and Bugis to China. The traders were in the coastal area for a relatively long period of time for trading purposes while waiting for a good opportunity to sail back to their home area (Abdullah, 1991). In Bali, there are several Islamic villages in coastal areas and cities that have developed to this day, such as Serangan Islamic Village, Loloan Islamic Village, Kepaon Islamic Village, Pegayaman Islamic Village, and Wanasari Village or Javanese Village in the Denpasar area (Kartini, 2011, p.125).

The placement of Islamic villages in the royal era is inseparable from the contestation of Islam with the political motives of the kingdom in Bali and Islamic politics from outside Bali. The motif of da'wah brought by wali songo then in Bali is known as wali pitu, then there are marriages and so on (Pageh, 2013, p.241).

If in Java, the spreaders of Islam are known as *wali songo*. In Bali, the spreaders of Islam are known as *wali pitu*. Walisongo lived in three important areas such as East Java, precisely in the areas of Surabaya, Gresik, and Lamongan, then in Central Java in the Demak Kudus and Muria areas while in West Java in the Cirebon area (Kholid, 2016, p.7). The name *wali pitu* is known from the research results of Habib Toyib Zein Assegaf. However, its application is not based on the agreement of Balinese Muslims, and its source is based on oral history and has an important influence on the development of Islam in Bali (Agung, 2021).



Eid al-Fitri and Eid al-Adha Celebrations during the Pandemic

In the development of Islam in Bali, freedom of worship for non-Hindu religious communities in Bali is highly upheld. This solidarity and tolerance is a hereditary legacy that continues to be maintained in society, starting from the understanding provided through education in schools to the community. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit almost all parts of the world, including Bali, it had made not only the economy but almost all human activities paralyzed, likewise with religious worship activities in Bali.

To prevent the spread of covid-19, the closure of mosques in Bali was carried out to coincide with the month of Ramadan on April 24, 2020. This was then emphasized by the Government on July 3-20, 2021, with the Implementation of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM), specifically in Java and Bali. Restrictions on activities are carried out, including closed places of worship such as churches, mosques, temples, temples, and monasteries. Places of worship are closed because they are one of the places where people gather for a long time.

Several legal rules during a pandemic regulate community activities, including Denpasar Mayor Regulation No.30 2020 concerning PPKM, followed by Bali Governor Circular Letter No. 3355 of 2020 concerning the New Era Order Protocol. Emergency PPKM in Bali Province was issued by the Governor's Circular Letter 9 of 2021, based on the Minister of Home Affairs Instruction No. 15 of 2021 concerning the 2018 Coronavirus emergency PPKM in the Java-Bali Region.

Because the number of Balinese people who have not decreased due to covid virus infection, the Bali Governor Circular Letter No. 7 of 2021 concerning the Extension of the Enforcement of Restrictions on Community Activities was issued on March 23, 2021, then followed by the issuance of Bali Government Regulation No. 10 of 2021 concerning the Implementation of Health Protocols followed by Bali Governor Circular No. 255 concerning New Era Life.

The closure of the mosque during the month of Ramadan on April 23, 2020-May 23, 2020, of course, presents inner turmoil among Muslims. The incident initially raised pros and cons in the community. The question of why places of worship are closed while malls or shopping centers ranging from lower to upper middle class remain open is one of the debates that arise. In response to this, the Bali regional government, in this case, in



collaboration with religious leaders and the Religious Communication Forum (FKUB), provided information about covid prevention.

One of the understandings is that for Islam, the main thing is the safety of fellow believers. As stated in the Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) No.14 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of Worship in a Covid Outbreak Situation¹⁹. In this case, the ulama as religious leaders also follow the government regulations issued in the Circular Letter of the Minister of Religion No.16 of 2021 concerning Technical Guidelines for the Implementation of Takbiran Night, Eid al-Adha Prayer, and the Implementation of Sacrifice in 1442 Hijri. The circular contains elements of fiqh / Sadd adz-Dzariah, namely preventing bad things from happening to oneself. The temporary closure of mosques is not only in Bali but also in the Grand Mosque in Makkah and the Nabawi Mosque in Madinah, Saudi Arabia, with solid Sharia arguments.

Various policies during the month of Ramadan recommend that people break their fast at home and for those who want to break the fast in public places so that food is not served buffet-style. During fasting and tarawih, health protocols are implemented. If people want to worship at the mosque, only men over ten are allowed. During *takbiran* night, it is also prohibited to hold mobile *takbir* and use loudspeakers in mosques to prevent crowds. This is stated in Circular Letter No. 6 of 2020, which states that Muslims in Bali are advised to pray for Tarawih and Friday prayers, tadarus Al-Quran, and *Takbiran* in their respective homes. If it is to be held at the mosque, there are only 5-10 participants. For solah in mosques such as the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque in Denpasar, only 50 percent of the capacity of 800-1000 congregations can be used. This situation is considered a test of faith and patience for Muslims because even for going home, the government applies the rule of being obliged to submit proof of vaccine 1, up to the booster vaccine until the negative covid-19 swab test results.

The Role of Social Media for Muslims During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Seeing the restrictions imposed on the community inevitably leads the community to maximize the use of social media as one of the most effective communication tools during the pandemic. The role of social media, among others, is as a means of education and communication. In shaping the character of the generation, it is easier to use social media. They see and hear everyday events or events on social media more quickly. The goal conveyed by scholars or content creators on Youtube is to provide education about Islam

so that it can be easily digested and touched on by the younger generation playing social media.

The second role of social media is communication, which is establishing friendships with WhatsApp and Video Call media. Before the pandemic, people were used to sending messages via Short Message System (SMS) and WhatsApp. During the pandemic, there were additional features used, namely video calls and Zoom meetings, Webex meetings, and Google meetings. By using this digital media, people can share messages and news and see faces quickly, directly, and affordably to release longing because they cannot meet in person due to PPKM.

The study used survey research methods to determine the role of social media. In a survey, information is collected from respondents using a questionnaire. Surveys are limited to samples to represent the population (Singarimbun, 1987, p.1). From the survey results of 30 student respondents at the Faculty of Humanities studying in Bali during the pandemic, the following are their answers.

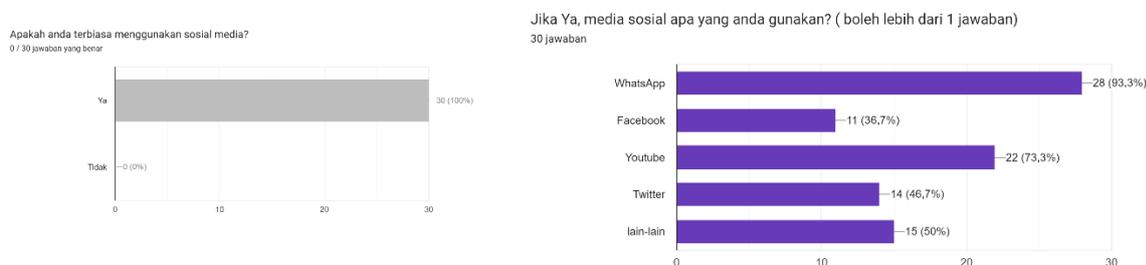


Figure 1: Question on social media (left) and the answers (right)

From the upper left diagram, it appears that 100% of the respondents are accustomed to using social media, which means that in the millennial era, no students do not have social media. Then what social media they use can be seen in the top right diagram, which shows that 93% of students use WhatsApp as the most frequently used means of communication in addition to Facebook 36.7%, YouTube 73%, Twitter 46.7%, and others 50%. It means that almost a variety of social media are owned, and one person can have two or more social media on his cellphone. During the pandemic, they also use social media facilities to get information about Islamic teachings or activities due to restrictions

on worship and gathering in public spaces. Therefore, the following survey results show whether the existence of social media helps them.

Apakah anda merasa terbantu dengan adanya media sosial yang menayangkan ajaran dan informasi tentang kegiatan agama Islam?
30 jawaban

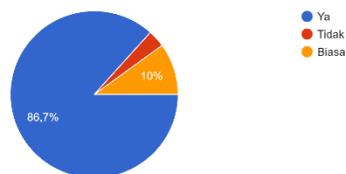


Figure 2: Survey Result on The Existence of Social Media

From their answers, it can be seen that 86.7 percent felt helped, and 10 percent felt normal. However, some said they were not helped. After conducting in-depth interviews with some respondents who said they were not helped, they said they felt normal.

Before the pandemic, content creators often used social media to spread Islamic propagation through their YouTube channels—Islamic nuanced content to introduce the Quran and debate with followers of other religions. These contents not only have a positive impact but also seem to cause confusion among the ummah. This can be seen in the survey results on students who feel happy with the existence of social media with Islamic content but are also confused by what they hear about debates with other people and fellow Muslims themselves. This certainly requires attention from scholars to be careful in providing information through social media. Netizens, in this case, the people who follow their social media, do not all have sufficient literacy to accept the information they see and the content on social media. Some receive it without filtering or finding out the truth, so they spread or forward the message massively. However, some are indifferent or discover the truth before believing or forwarding these messages to others.

CONCLUSION

From the results of the research that has been done, it can be concluded that the early arrival of Islam in Bali took place peacefully and was well-received around the 15th century. Their presence was considered brothers until the term Nyama Selam emerged, which means Islamic brothers. Islamic settlements or villages today spread in coastal areas and mountainous and urban areas, causing Balinese society to become a multicultural society.



Eid al-Fitri and Eid al-Adha celebrations during the Pandemic in Bali occurred amid restrictions on activities in places of worship. With the rules issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council, the entire series of activities from Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr to Eid al-Adha proceeded in accordance with Health protocols. This indicates the awareness of the ummah to comply with the rules and prioritize safety and health together despite the pros and cons at the beginning of the implementation of PPKM.

The role of Social media for Muslims during the Covid-19 Pandemic is very influential for Muslims, especially the younger generation. Social media acts as an effective means of education and communication. Almost 100 percent of students use social media and mainly use WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube in their daily lives. Therefore, the role of social media, which has such a significant influence, should be managed as well as possible for the progress of the nation and state and future generations.

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