



Communication Adaptation Of Islamic Political Parties During The Regulation of The Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstrak:

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh pandemi COVID-19 yang telah mentransformasi komunikasi manusia di tengah berbagai ketidakpastian yang secara cepat dan drastis mengubah hampir seluruh aspek kehidupan. Salah satu yang terdampak adalah komunikasi antara anggota DPRD dengan konstituennya dalam memenuhi kewajiban konstitusional melalui program reses. Studi kasus deskriptif kualitatif ini dilakukan pada Fraksi Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP) DPRD Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis strategi dan hambatan adaptasi komunikasi yang dilakukan anggota DPRD KPS pada masa reses di tengah regulasi pandemi COVID-19. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman, dengan teknik pengumpulan data meliputi observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi, serta pemilihan sampel dilakukan dengan teknik purposive sampling. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa pandemi COVID-19 memunculkan pendekatan baru dalam penyelenggaraan masa reses bagi anggota Fraksi PPP di DPRD NTB, yang sebelumnya tidak dirasakan sebagai wujud adaptasi komunikasi di masa pandemi. Studi ini juga mengungkapkan bahwa hambatan adaptasi komunikasi telah menyebabkan perubahan peraturan.

Abstract:

This research is motivated by the COVID-19 pandemic which has transformed human communication amidst various uncertainties that have quickly and drastically changed almost all aspects of life. One of the impacts is communication between DPRD members and their constituents in fulfilling constitutional obligations through the recess program. This qualitative descriptive case study was conducted on the United Development Party (PPP) Fraction of the West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) DPRD. This research aims to identify and analyze strategies and barriers to communication adaptation carried out by KPS DPRD members during the recess period amidst the COVID-19 pandemic regulations. The collected data was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, with data collection techniques including observation, interviews and documentation, and sample selection was carried out using a purposive sampling technique. This study shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to a new approach in organizing the recess period for members of the PPP faction in the NTB DPRD, which was previously not perceived as a form of communication adaptation during the pandemic. This study also reveals that communication adaptation barriers have led to regulatory changes.



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Introduction

Since Indonesia confirmed its first case in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed many things in just two years. Its dimensions are not only related to the health sector alone but have broadly impacted all aspects. In education, the pandemic sparked the birth of online learning, now known to the public as Blended Learning (Fathurrahman et al., 2022). In the religious and cultural sector, the pandemic has changed how religious people carry out their religious worship and cultural rituals (Suhadah et al., 2021). Meanwhile, in the economic sector, the pandemic has given rise to new business ways (Fahrurrozi et al., 2022). Apart from that, the pandemic has also changed the way humans communicate. One example is the communication of Members of the Provincial Legislatives Council of West Nusa Tenggara (DPRD NTB) with constituents while undergoing recess activities, which are a constitutional obligation of representatives of the people.

Recess is one of the formal forums prepared constitutionally for implementing communication between DPRD members and constituents in their constituency. It is held at least three times a year with all costs using state funds. Recess is when DPRD members, individually or in groups, visit their constituencies to absorb the people's aspirations, seek input, and real problems faced by the community to be followed up by their duties and functions as representatives of the people (Atmaja, 2015). As a constitutional obligation, recess cannot be abandoned because of a pandemic. It becomes very problematic if recess is still held during a pandemic requiring physical gathering restrictions. The standard COVID-19 health protocol prohibits recess activities because they have to present 1,200 people in eight meetings in different places for eight days.

These conditions put the Members of the DPRD NTB in a dilemma. Communication with constituents in the Recess is the spirit of all their activities as representatives of the people. The results of the communication with the constituents become provisions for them to carry out their three main functions as Members of the Council: the Budgeting Function, the Oversight Function, and the Legislative Function. In addition, communication with constituents is also a form of responsibility after they receive the mandate as representatives of the people, as well as part of performance accountability. Moreover, one of the most affected entities in the DPRD NTB is the people's representatives, who come from Islamic-based political parties. Syamsuddin Haris defines them as parties that explicitly call themselves Islamic parties and use Islamic principles, ideology, and symbols (Haris, 2014). DPRD members from Islamic-based political parties have distinctive communication features with constituents. They often take advantage of religious events to greet and communicate with constituents, such as the activities of the Majelis Taklim, Majelis Dzikir, Istighosah, or the haul of a charismatic religious figure. Because religious events are synonymous with the presence of large numbers of worshipers, these events are prohibited during the pandemic.

Recess activities are still going on despite the pandemic. Data from the NTB Health Office and the COVID-19 Task Force show that six months after the first case was confirmed, 10 regencies/cities in NTB still have the "Red Zone" status, with positive patient deaths reaching 5.92 percent and far above the average—national death rate. During these conditions, one who continued recess activities was a member of the Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP) Faction in the NTB DPRD. PPP is one of five Islamic-based political parties that has succeeded in placing its cadres in the DPRD NTB besides the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, Partai Amanat Nasional, and Partai Bulan Bintang. In the 2019 election, PPP was the Islamic-based party with the highest vote gain in NTB. Overall, the PPP is the third winner in the election under the Golkar Party and Gerindra Party. As the winning party, PPP requires its cadres in the DPRD NTB to maintain stable communication with constituents and maintain its position as a top party. Because of this, a pandemic is not an excuse not to hold recess activities, and therefore, all PPP cadres in the DPRD NTB are asked not to remain silent and look for strategies to stay connected with constituents in recess activities during a pandemic.

As it turned out, adapting to the situation and changing communication strategies were essential aspects that made Recess activities during the pandemic still possible for members of the PPP DPRD NTB faction to carry out. Communication adaptation is interpreted as a modification to achieve efficient communication where individuals adapt to the communicative behavior of others (Yohana et al., 2017). In communication activities, Hafied Cangara explained that the communication adaptation strategy is the best combination of all modifications related to communication elements, starting from the communicator, message, channel (media), and receiver, to the effect where all of these modifications are designed to achieve the goal optimal communication (Cangara, 2002). Under normal circumstances, the recess for DPRD members is held in face-to-face meetings at eight points for eight days, with at least 150 constituents present at each point. However, in a pandemic condition, considering that gathering constituents is prohibited, a modification is needed as a communication adaptation strategy so that recess activities can continue. In this regard, it is essential to know how members of the PPP DPRD NTB faction could still carry out recess activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Operationally, this research will focus on uncovering the communication adaptation strategy used by legislators of PPP DPRD NTB during recess during the COVID-19 pandemic and the obstacles accompanying this communication adaptation strategy.

This research is qualitative and is designed using a case study approach. In contrast, qualitative research is social research that aims to understand the object of research in-depth and intends to explore the meaning of behavior behind human actions (Rukin, 2021). This research does not use statistical data but through data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018). Using this descriptive research, this research can describe a situation regarding the adaptation of the

communication of legislators to Islamic-based political parties in the DPRD NTB from the Partai Persatuan Pembangunan during recess with their constituents.

The subjects of this study were members of the PPP DPRD NTB faction, which were determined by the purposive sampling method, which is a way of taking samples based on specific criteria by researchers (Ramdhan, 2021). Members of the PPP DPRD NTB faction were chosen because, according to researchers, they are the parties most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, bearing in mind that their communication with constituents is often carried out at religious events which usually present large numbers of people, so it is forbidden to hold them during a pandemic. Information was obtained from informants using in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, which became primary data. At the same time, the literature related to the research topic is used as secondary data. The collected data is processed through the stages of data analysis using the Miles and Huberman models, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion (Murdiyanto, 2020).

To obtain the validity of the data, the researcher tested the credibility of the data using the source triangulation technique. Researchers test the credibility of the data by checking the data obtained through several different relevant sources to convince researchers about the correctness and completeness of research data

Result and Discussion

Recess activities for the PPP DPRD NTB faction members are not merely constitutional obligations as people's representatives. Nor is it merely a professional responsibility but a necessity. As an Islamic party, PPP places recess activities that meet and communicate with people who align with Islamic teachings about friendship—not just connecting but strengthening the bond that has existed for a long time. Because of this, the deputy chairman of the DPRD NTB from the PPP faction, H Muzihir, who is also the chairman of the DPW PPP NTB emphasized that the pandemic was not a barrier for members of the PPP faction to greet the public in recess.

Before the pandemic broke out, seven members of the PPP DPRD NTB faction, along with 58 other members of the DPRD NTB, since being inaugurated on September 2, 2019, had two regular recess periods with face-to-face meetings in the meeting building presenting at least 150 participants. The first recess was held on 11-18 November 2019, and the second was in February 2020. The first recess for members of the PPP faction during the pandemic was held on 10-17 May 2020. At that time, the situation in NTB was tense. The government is imposing Large-Scale Social Restrictions on ten districts/cities in NTB with red zone status, the most dangerous level of the three regional status zones regarding the spread of COVID-19, indicating a very high risk of transmission.

With the red zone status, residents are asked to stay at home. At that time, inter-regional commercial flights were also abolished because those living in the red zone were not allowed to leave their area. Regulation of the

Minister of Health Number 9 of 2020 concerning Guidelines for Large-Scale Social Restrictions in the Context of Accelerating the Handling of Corona Virus Disease 2019 requires that schools and workplaces be closed in red zone areas. Exceptions only apply to offices of strategic agencies that provide services related to defense and security, public order, health, food needs, fuel oil and gas, health services, economy, finance, communications, industry, export and import, distribution, logistics, and other needs base. So are religious activities. Congregational prayers at the mosque are only for the marbot and imam, while religious activities that gather and present large numbers of worshipers are prohibited. Religious activities may only be carried out at home but may only be attended by limited families by keeping everyone's physical distance—activities in public places or facilities. Shopping centers like malls are prohibited except for essential needs shops and supermarkets.

This research found that to stay connected and communicate stably with constituents in their constituencies, members of the PPP faction modified recess activities as a strategy for adapting communication with constituents during a pandemic.

Virtual Recess

Members of the PPP DPRD NTB faction made their first choice in virtual recess through the Zoom application, which was rising during the pandemic. The head of the PPP DPRD NTB faction, Mohammad Akri, was one of those who held a virtual recess meeting. This Central Lombok politician designed a virtual recess involving nodes who had volunteered for the winning team in the election. Technically, volunteer nodes in each sub-district gather a maximum of 10 people near their homes, then sit together outside the room while implementing health protocols via the volunteer's intelligent cell phone; residents attend meetings via Zoom with Akri, who is present from home personnel. Constituents who attended were not given transport money but received food and drink during the virtual recess, the funds of which were transferred to volunteers by Akri to be spent.

Door to Door Recess

Unable to gather constituents in a total of 150 people in one meeting due to the implementation of the health protocol, members of the PPP faction chose recess by visiting constituents from house to house. In its implementation, the members of the PPP faction were not alone but also appointed a team to act on their behalf in order to be able to reach meetings with 1,200 constituents within eight days of the recess.

Grocery Sharing Recess

Simultaneously with the door-to-door recess strategy, members of the PPP faction of the DPRD NTB distributed groceries to constituents who visited and met at their residences. The groceries were purchased by diverting the allotment of the recess food and drink budget to purchase groceries. One staple food package contains rice, sugar, and instant noodles.

The distribution of groceries took place quickly, without speeches, and if there were constituent aspirations, they were asked to submit them in writing.

Setting up Call Center Recess

As a result of face-to-face meetings being unable to take place for a long time during door-to-door recess and recess sharing of groceries, members of the PPP DPRD NTB faction also prepared a communication adaptation strategy in the form of a Call Center. In practice, the PPP faction prepared a particular WhatsApp number to become a kind of Call Center that constituents could contact to convey their aspirations. Experts from the PPP faction of the NTB DPRD manage the Call Center. All incoming messages to the Call Center are processed and grouped by faction experts based on constituency to be forwarded and followed up by faction members.

Recess Participation Prevent COVID-19

Amid the increasing positive cases of COVID-19 and the increasing number of those who could not be saved, members of the PPP DPRD NTB faction also held a recess by actively participating in protecting the community. Members of the PPP faction distribute vitamins for immunity, help with hand sanitizer masks, and sterilize settlements and places of worship with disinfectants.

Research findings related to communication adaptation strategies carried out by PPP faction members during recess during the COVID-19 Pandemic can be diagrammed as follows:

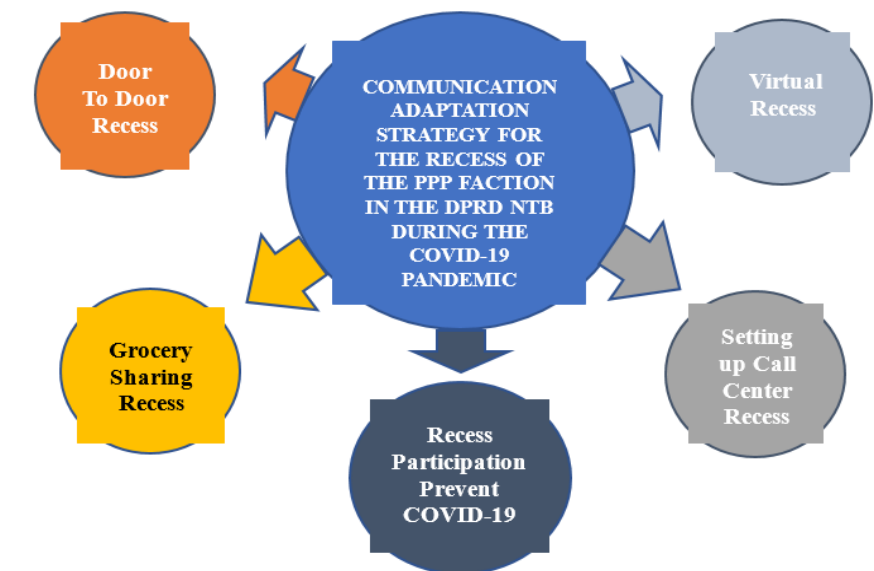


Figure 1. Diagram of Recess Communication Adaptation Strategy for the PPP DPRD NTB Faction during the COVID-19 Pandemic

From the results of this study, it appears that the communication adaptation strategy carried out by members of the PPP DPRD NTB faction shows how they have implemented a communication adaptation strategy by modifying the elements in communication. They started by modifying elements of communicators, messages, communication media, and communicants. Virtual recess, using the Zoom application, is a fundamental modification of the communication medium. The Zoom application has acted as a tool or means of communication to convey messages to constituents or vice versa. In this case, Zoom's communication media is like a bridge and a vehicle in the human communication cycle because it becomes a liaison and a messenger from the sender to the recipient of the message (Kadri, 2022).

Recess from door to door is also thick with modifications of communicator elements in communication. The move by members of the PPP DPRD NTB faction to deploy a team of volunteers to represent them to meet with the community from door to door is a form of modification of this communicator. In communication activities, the communicator participates in communication with the communicant. The term communicator refers to the subject of communication or someone who initiates or starts the communication process (Kadri, 2022). This communication modification was also seen in the preparation of the recess Call Center by appointing faction experts as managers and acting on behalf of PPP faction members when communicating directly with constituents.

On the other hand, recess from house to house also shows the presence of modifications to the elements of the communicant. If, during the recess before the pandemic, as many constituents as possible were gathered, then during the recess during the pandemic, the number of constituents present as communicants was limited. The less, the better. While in the groceries sharing recess, it was evident that the message elements were modified in the communication. The staple food has become an unspoken and unwritten message from members of the PPP DPRD NTB faction to constituents. The same thing applies when members of the PPP faction hold a recess to participate in preventing COVID-19. Sending vitamins, masks, hand sanitizers and sterilizing settlements and places of worship is a form of modifying the message to constituents.

Usually, a strategy, even though preparation and planning have been carried out, is implemented, something still does not go according to plan due to obstacles. In general, the obstacles faced by members of the PPP faction in carrying out communication adaptation strategies during the recess were situational and regulatory. Virtual recess cannot be carried out evenly because not all areas are covered by a communication network with stable data services, so it only effectively reaches urban constituents. Door-to-door recess, grocery sharing recess, and participatory recess preventing COVID-19 requires significant resources. They were starting from the number of volunteers to the materials. Meanwhile, the recess call center recorded obstacles to limited follow-up of incoming aspirations. These barriers align with the barriers in communication in which there are internal and external.

Especially for regulatory barriers, it had significant consequences. The move by members of the PPP DPRD NTB faction to divert the cost of eating and drinking recess to buy groceries was declared to have violated regional financial management. The Supreme Audit Agency carried it out. Several members of the PPP faction had to return the recess meal and drink funds that had been transferred to the regional treasury. One member of the PPP faction even had to return up to IDR 80,000,000.

CONCLUSION

Based on this study's findings, two things can be concluded. First, adaptive communication to various situations will be able to continue to maintain a strong and stable relationship between DPRD members and their constituents. The communication adaptation strategy carried out by members of the PPP DPRD NTB faction during a recess shows the importance of flexibility for each person's representative when communicating with constituents. This communication flexibility is an exit strategy for legislators to carry out their constitutional obligations to maintain communication with constituents, even in a disaster. Second, communication adaptation barriers do not always become a barrier. On the contrary, it can trigger breakthroughs and regulatory changes in a more positive direction.

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