
COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS CONSELORS IN STRENGTHENING THE FAITH OF MUALLAF IN KALORAN, TEMANGGUNG, CENTRAL JAVA

MUKTI ALI, SUSI RATNA SARI, REZA AHMADIANSAH, WIN
LISTYANINGRUM ARIFIN

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Mukti Ali

Salatiga State Islamic University
Jl. Lingkar Salatiga Km. 2,
Salatiga, Central Java-
Indonesia
Email: muktiali@iainsalatiga.ac.id

Susi Ratna Sari

Salatiga State Islamic University
Jl. Lingkar Salatiga Km. 2,
Salatiga, Central Java-
Indonesia
e-mail: susiratna26@gmail.com

Reza Ahmadiansah

Salatiga State Islamic University
Jl. Lingkar Salatiga Km. 2,
Salatiga, Central Java-
Indonesia
e-mail:
rezaahmadiansah@iainsalatiga.ac.id

Win Listyaningrum Arifin

Salatiga State Islamic University
Jl. Lingkar Salatiga Km. 2,
Salatiga, Central Java-
Indonesia
e-mail:
winlistyaningrum@iainsalatiga.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims at determining the strategy of Islamic conselors preaching to maintain the faith values of converts in Getas Village, Kaloran District, Temanggung Regency. Applying a qualitative research approach, this study revealed: 1) the number of converts to Islam in 2019 reached 37 people and in 2020 they increased 43 converts. Meanwhile, based on the Islamic charter there were 10 converts in Getas village. Seeing the condition of converts who are classified as still unstable in their level of faith, a special strategy is needed to provide assistance. 2) The da'wah strategy used by the Islamic instructor in Getas Village is to establish a special taklim assembly for the guidance of converts. 3) Establishing Children's Learning House (RBA). 4) Providing motivation to converts by using the da'wah method both bil-lisan (oral) and bil-hal (action). 5) Strengthening the economy of independent converts through the program of M.Tri.

Keywords: Communication Strategies; Islamic Religious Conselors; Faith; Muallaf

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui strategi dakwah penyuluh agama Islam dalam upaya mempertahankan nilai-nilai keimanan muallaf di Desa Getas Kecamatan Kaloran Kabupaten Temanggung. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kualitatif. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa 1) jumlah muallaf pada tahun 2019 lalu mencapai 37 orang. Sementara pada tahun 2020 jumlah muallaf di Kecamatan Kaloran mengalami peningkatan yaitu sebanyak 43 muallaf yang bersyahadat di KUA Kecamatan Kaloran. Sedangkan untuk jumlah muallaf di Desa Getas sendiri terdapat 10 muallaf berdasarkan piagam Islam yang diperolehnya. Melihat kondisi muallaf yang tergolong masih labil tingkat keimanannya, maka dibutuhkan suatu strategi yang khusus untuk melakukan pendampingan kepada muallaf. 2) Strategi dakwah yang digunakan penyuluh agama Islam di Desa Getas yaitu mendirikan majelis taklim khusus untuk binaan muallaf. 3) Mendirikan Rumah Belajar Anak (RBA). 4) Memberikan motivasi kepada muallaf dengan menggunakan metode dakwah bil-lisan dan bil-hal. 5) Penguatan ekonomi muallaf mandiri melalui program (M.Tri).

Kata Kunci: Strategi Komunikasi; Penyuluh Agama Islam; Keimanan; Muallaf

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INTRODUCTION

Humans are social creatures and dependant to others. Each human being needs the help of others. Socially, they cannot get rid of mutual assistance amongst others when they experience severe situation such as disasters and other catastrophes. Such disasters usually become the reminder amongst human on how they cannot live independently. For some cases, they state that they are quite dependant individuals where they can stand on their own feet. However, the common features show that they must go hand in hand and tight the hands to be stronger when problems appear and they need aids from others.

Human can be said that he is individual when the notion comes toward his existence as the God's creature. This special relationship between God and human remains unique. As individual, each person depends on all his matters to his Creator. Even when they are more than one, they cannot neglect their Creator. As a flock of people, they might be big, bigger than when they are alone. Indeed, they are still fragile as human. Through natural phenomena, they rely on the existence of God. Thus, humans are indeed very religious by believing in God (Muhammaddin, 2013). Thence, the relationship between God and human is very individual. The only person who can remark the closed-relationship between him and God is himself. To note, the relationship when it is viewed from the human's perspective is very fluctuative.

The relationship is clearly seen from a term called religion. It is very individual where the meaning is very personal. It is commonly believed that religion as the guide for human is the first human right. It is a direct and innate gift from God given directly when a mother gave a birth. It is a manifestation on the existence of God that drives human to be religious and embraces the religion freely.

Humans believe that God has the greatest power to be the one and only (Zein, 2018). They are created to worship God and to do good things through the teaching of religion. Each religion on earth expands good lesson from God. It is humans' right to choose a religion he believes in more. However, people often convert from their previous religion into the newest one caused by several conflicting factors such as uneasy feeling. The phenomenon often appears among the converts particularly when it relates to the surroundings. The conversion choice is a big and sacred decision. The decision to embrace a new religion is something mysterious. One will say that it depends on one's heart. However, one will say that the decision to embrace a certain belief different from his previous belief is something related to a call directly from God. Again, embracing a certain belief is a pure decision to make no matter on how the process takes place. Ali, Arifin, and Muttaqien (2022) state that religion is the most personal and respected right that can be effectively articulated in an effective communication pattern. It means when a convert chooses Islam and leaves his previous belief, it his personal right and he has privilege to communicate or to publish his new belief to others.

Most of the converts are still confused in learning their new religion. So, there is a high possibility to return to their previous religion. Seeing the condition of converts who are still relatively weak in their level of faith, Islamic religious counselors in Getas Village need to apply the right preaching strategy in providing guidance to converts. As a believer, they must be able to motivate and provide guidance on faith to converts. Preaching activities in this case have an important role in improving the quality of faith for individuals and groups to make Islam as a way of life (Hasan, 2013). In accordance to this situation they feel calm and not easily influenced to return to their former religion.

The Strategy of Preaching

In *da'wah*, we also need a strategy to convey it on target (Gunawan & Muhid, 2022). Strategy has an important meaning on a process to achieve the desired goal (Ginanjar et al., 2019). It is a plan of action to achieve excellence in a competition or activity. It describes how an effective action plan will be implemented (Yam, 2020); (Muslih et al., 2021); (Bender et al., 2022). Furthermore, it can help someone to determine long-term plans in dealing with the future. It is similarly stated by Wheelen and Hunger (Taufiqkhoran, 2016) and Stanley et al. (2021). They stated that strategy covers four stages, namely: environmental scanning, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and monitor.

Strategy has an important role in an organization where it is used as a guide to achieve goals. The concept of strategy contains a variety of one's long term thoughts to create a competitive advantage (Rahmat, 2019). Hamdani (2020) explains that the term strategy refers to efforts to achieve goals effectively and efficiently. Thus, there is a plan on how or steps that will be used to achieve a goal. In the context of preaching, strategy is used as a guide to determine the right method in line with the dynamics of the environment and the *mad'u* situation to run the sermon effectively and efficiently.

Etimologically, *da'wah* (preaching) comes from Arabic word *daa*, *yadu*, *dawan*, *du'a* which means an appeal, invites, calls, and requests. In the Qur'an, *da'wah* is used to invite goodness or *amr maruf nahi munkar* (Aziz, 2019); and (Hamdani, 2020). Meanwhile, Hayati states that it is a motivating action in accordance to Islamic teachings to do good deeds and stay away from evil (2017). *Da'wah* strategy is a distinctive form of communication where a communicator conveys messages that are sourced on the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah (Abdullah

& Mubarak, 2019). Islam is called the religion of *da'wah* because of the invitation and the process of spreading is done in peaceful manner and no coercion. Natsir (in Qadaruddin, 2019) defines that *da'wah* is an effort to convey Islamic teachings to all people regarding the goals and views of human life. It is delivered with the media and various ways permitted by Islamic law and applied good morals in everyday life. Islam cannot be publicly noticed when *da'wah* is missing. It is a media to spread Islam worldwide.

Relating to recent situation when Islam is still perceived negatively, *da'wah* is the righteous way explain and clarify Islam. It can be done directly to the people or set up through media both printed and online. The strategy to preach Islam using media is improving now. The preachers used attractive but imperative way in delivering *da'wah*. When it is documented, it becomes reference for people, both muslims and non-muslims, to know Islam without approaching or attending the gathering. Thus, *da'wah* and Islam cannot be separated. They are one and are mutual.

To achieve success in preaching, of course, it cannot be separated from the elements of preaching i.e. *da'i* as *da'wah* actors, *mad'u*, media, materials, effects, and methods (Aziz, 2019). These components are very important in carrying out preaching activities. It can run in accordance with its objectives if it pays attention to these various elements. In preaching, one must also pay attention to the method or model used by the *da'i*. This preaching model is a reference to influence or invite someone to take action in accordance with the message conveyed by the preacher on the teachings of Islam (Ahmadiansah, 2019). The methods activities include: the *bil-lisan da'wah* (lecturing), *bil-hal da'wah* (giving examples of actions to *mad'u*), and *bil-qal da'wah* (delivering through writings).

The existence of preaching in society is able to be a light and guide in life, especially for converts. A correct approach of reaching can be well received. As carriers of preaching, *da'i* plays an important role in spreading the teachings of Islam. *Da'wah* can be said to be successful if it has an effect that can change a person's behavior to do good in life. It aims at influencing three aspects on attitude, knowledge, and behavior. Someone whose heart has understood the message is motivated to behave in accordance with the conveyed preaching (Aziz, 2019). Thus, preaching activity is a noble and is able to influence others to do goodness.

Islamic Religious Counselor (*Da'i*)

The Islamic Religious counselor (*penyuluh*) is derived from the word '*suluh*' which means 'enlightenment' where their activities are expected to improve skills, attitudes and knowledge. Islamic counselor is assumed as a person to guide the counselee to achieve certain goals. Indeed, the integrity of professional ethical commitment must be owned by Islamic counselor (Haryati, 2018). The party has tasks, rights, authorities and responsibilities in carrying out religious-related guidance. They convey messages of preaching and guidance to the community on Islamic issues of faith and character ((Hidayat, 2019); and (Mazid et al., 2021)). Islamic religious counselors have important roles in empowering religious issues to the community. As *da'i*, he is the agent of change in social life to bring the community for a better direction. In addition, he plays a role in bringing progress on religious matters.

Therefore, *da'i* must be able to understand and masters the preaching material method. Noorbani (2016) stated that *da'i* is the front guard in disseminating development policies issued by the Ministry of Religion. Thus, the goal of Islamic religious counselors in changing the society for the betterment can be achieved. The

reacher plays a role in the process of developing Islamic society. Meanwhile, according to Kustini (in Rohman & Nugraha, 2017) states that there are three functions of Islamic religious counselors in providing counseling to achieve success, including:

- a. Advocative function. Here, *da'i* has a big responsibility to social or moral issues by defending the target community for disturbances, threats, challenges, and obstacles that are considered to be detrimental to the faiths, morals, and worships of the community.
- b. Educational and informative function. *Da'i* plays a role to educate, to guide, and to direct the community about religious teachings. Besides that, it is his duty and obligation to preach and to convey the teachings of Islam.
- c. Consultative function. It is a situation where *da'i* actively participates in overcoming various problems in the society not only on personal or family problems but also on community problems. He fosters and provides solutions on problems related to Islamic teachings.

Faith Value

Values are guidelines for behavior in society to assist someone in examining whether the behavior is right or wrong in accordance with applicable norms (Imelda, 2017). Every action taken by humans contains value, meaning that value has a close relationship with human life. Value is a person's view or thought on a thing, whether it can be in the form of objects or actions that are seen as truth, beauty, justice, and standard of behavior that are efficient and binding on humans. These values are used as beliefs to be carried out and maintained in life. Spranger (in Jeumpa, 2017) divides the values into six. Those are religious, social, political values, economic,

aesthetic, and theoretical. All of them have a relationship with human behavior or attitudes to provide an assessment whether the actions taken are in accordance with religion, culture, ethics, and norms applied in society.

In social life, values have an important role as a reference to behave within the surroundings. By recognizing these values, they will foster harmony between people. They accelerate concordance and togetherness. Values are considered things and have essential function to unite every citizen as a unified nation. They are state values' system in accordance with the norms prevailing in the society. In addition, values also serve as the basis for instructions or guidelines to determine and differ every right or deviant actions in the society (Umar, 2015). In social life, humans make values as references to act in accordance with applicable rules. However, based on the norms prevailing in society, it is no other religious values to state about human strong belief.

Religion is an important need for every individual which is closely related to the belief in the existence of God. It is strongly believed that human's life cannot be separated from the prevailed problems that are closed to innate belief to God. This means that the arisen problem of each individual can be solved by the help of the God. Each person relies on its creator.

Faith derives from Arabic word which its basic word *amana yuminu imanan* means to believe or have faith. Etymologically, faith means justification or belief. It is the attitude of justifying something, assuming, and believing for something true. The concept of faith itself is fully heart believing and justifying, then it is verbally expressing and practicing in action It means carrying out orders and staying away from the prohibitions of God and His Messenger (Shodiq, 2017). Faith is one way to create a sense of security, tranquility, and peace for human life. Here,

humans feel free from anxiety because their lives are based on strong faith in their hearts. Nevertheless, Gibb and Kramers (Hatta, 2019) argue that faith is believing in God and His messengers and believing in the mandate God sent down to His messengers. Qur'an explains verse on faith: 1) Faith is confirming news or everything that comes from Allah and His Messenger. 2) Faith with charity is good deed and do not conflict with the determined law by *syara*. Faith in God can also be realized in the form of *taqwa* to follow all the guidelines that have been outlined by Allah SWT.

Novianti & Hidayat (2020) explain that faith is a force for religion in realizing the purpose of its presence in mankind. Faith is also a proof of the true religion for people. It comes to a claim that religious people but do not believe in accordance with the principles of their religious teachings are actually not religious.

Based on the above understanding, it can be concluded that the faith value is a person's view of something whether it can be in the form of objects or actions that are seen as truth and standards of efficient and bind behavior to believe in the existence of Allah, Almighty God, and His messengers. Faith can shape a person to think and to be more careful in carrying out his life, because he always remembers that Allah is All-Knowing. To state, someone will feel calm because of the full belief in his heart.

Converts (*Muallaf*)

Muallaf is the term to represent people who just moves to Islam from other religion (Noviza, 2013); (Yudha, 2016); and (Fatiyah, 2019) both from the nuclear family, the friendship environment, the workplace, and their social environment. This paper discusses to be analyzed and discussed about the discussion of the comparison (conversion. They embrace Islam as their new beliefs. Convert is the later word for *muallaf*

is someone who has just converted to Islam. He is lack of knowledge on Islam. This feature is relatively common experienced by a convert. Furthermore, converted believers to Islam are those who have already but they still need a lot of adaptation processes to their new religion, Islam (Fahrudin, 2020); (Johari, Ab Aziz, et al., 2014); and (Johari, Aziz, et al., 2014). In the perspective of the Qur'an, a convert is someone whose heart is softened to enter Islam. He has no doubt in his heart to believe in the teachings of Islam. In this case, convert to Islam certainly needs guidance and direction as his faith on their new religion is still weak. Both of guidance and direction can be used to minimize a contra decision for a convert to return to his previous belief (Rahayu, 2019).

Religious conversion is a sacred thing in people's lives. Some people will relate this choice as mysterious decision. Converts state that the decision to embrace Islam is not merely their choice. No matter the reason behind the decision, they imply that there is God's intervention. Though, it is agreed by many people, it is hard to prove the statement. Currently, the event of religious conversion is not something that is considered strange by the community. The choice to belief to another teaching becomes common and is influenced by various factors both externally and internally. These determined factors are personal decision, family-based, disposition, status level, economic-based situation, and environmental living (Muhdhori, 2017).

Based on the theory above, it can be concluded that a *muallaf* is a person who converts from his previous religion to Islam caused by several influential factors. As the level of faith is still relatively weak, a convert needs more guidance on Islamic teachings.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach by applying a natural setting and not focussing on numbers to observe and analyze directly on an event or phenomenon in field. This study maximizes the methods in conducting observations, maintaining interviews, and making use of documentation (Moleong, 2021). This qualitative research focuses more on understanding various problems in social life based on the reality existing in the society to describe narratively about the activities carried out and what impacts are obtained from an action taken in life (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018:7).

The purpose of using qualitative research is to describe the object-studied and to explain the conditions in field field. The obtained data is deeply analyzed to produce a the existing phenomenon by a direct observation. This research is conducted in Getas Village, Kaloran District, Temanggung Regency. This study focusses discussion on how the effort strategy of Islamic religious preachers to maintain the values of the faith of converts. The research approach used in this study aims at obtaining data in accordance with the facts in the field and finding out the process done by the preachers to guide converts. It also aims at understanding factors needed to achieve the certain goals.

Field research is done to participate in the field. Later, it is used to prove the facts about the condition of the people of Getas Village, Kaloran District, which is known as a miniature of Indonesia because of the diversity of its people. Furthermore, it aids to feel and to get a comprehensive picture of real local conditions (Simanjuntak & Sosrodiharjo, 2014). Researchers came to the field to make observations about the conditions and described the conditions that occur in the field. This field observation was mutual for the researchers to jot down the real situation they found. The observation also gave insights to do further decision about the study.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Communication Strategy of Islamic Religious Counselors in Strengthening the Faith of Converts in Kaloran, Temanggung, Central Java

Strategy is a way or long-term lannig arrangement to deal with the future. The used strategy is to provide guidance for converts on the cultivation of faith who are still unstable and easily influenced. A right *da'wah* is substantial to take for granted for this situation. Preachers must be able to motivate, provide direction, and guide converts in learning and understanding Islam. This might help the converts to practice Islamic teachings and to shape the faith not to be easily influenced to return to their previous religion.

Based on these conditions, coaching for converts has an important role to form and maintain the faith. Guidance for converts in Getas Village is directly carried out by Islamic religious counselors. Based on the research result, the data revealed that the number of converts in 2019 reached 37 people. Meanwhile, in 2020 the number of 43 converts oathed in the religious reresentative office in Kaloran District. Meanwhile, there were 10 converts in Getas Village. It was based on the Islamic charter received by the converts. The real situataionn in filed showed that an appropriate preaching strategy was essential as assist for converts in maintaining faith properly.

A conducted interview with RM on June, 14 2021 profiled that the condition of converts to Islam in Getas Village needed guidance, as the were newcomers in Islam. The environment also took part in shaping for the converts faith. To overcome this condition, the Islamic preacher strategy should be on target that the material can be well-received by the fostered converts.

The preaching activities carried out by Islamic preachers in Getas Village are in line with Wheelen and Hunger's theory (in Taufiqurokhman, 2016: 28) that covers four stages, namely environmental scanning (analysis), formulation strategy, strategy implementation, and s well as evaluation and control (supervision). The environemental analysis is the first step in preaching where the message of preaching can hit the heart of the *mad'u* and can be practiced in life in accordance with the teachings of Islam.

A similar situation has been shown by M on June 16, 2021. He revealed that the first step for the Islamic religious extender was to carry out the stages of implementing the strategy was by analyzing the environment. Here, the preacher could map the converts' educational background, socio-economic condition, and the family relationship. The condition of converts in Getas Village needed more guidance on issues in Islam and its jurisprudence. Most of the converts in Getas Village only tried to extent of fulfilling the requirements. However, they were still far from knowing Islam particularly on procedures of worshipping. In this case, the preachers form the representative office of Religious Ministry (KUA) the leadership of Temanggung Regency, have carried out noble tasks in improving the quality of understanding and Islamic teachings practice. There were 8 assigned preachers in KUA at Kaloran District. They were spread into different locations to conduct coaching. This location division aims to maximize the activities of converts in the process of strengthening the faith to be firmly embedded in the hearts. For this reason, the preachers in Getas Village provided guidance by establishing a *taklim* (religious meeting) as a forum for conveying their preach to the community.

It was in line with the interview with RM on June 14, 2021 where *taklim* (religious gathering) was the best strategy for converts to understand well about Islam. This gathering frequently

ended up with questions on Islam posted by converts. Thus, the establishment of communication between converts and Islamic religious counselors were very important. The given material in strengthening the faith, jurisprudence and others issues related on Islam must be open delivered.

Beside establishing a religious meeting, the counselors also continuously strived to provide motivation toward adaption of the preaching message as most of the converts had no idea about Islamic teachings. It can be inferred that the faith level of converts is still relatively weak, especially for new ones. To deal with this situation, preaching strategies to strengthen the faith in the hearts of converts is applied.

An interview with M on June 16, 2021 revealed that the counselors should apply a strategy to provide encouragement or motivation to converts so that they believe and have awareness in hearts to learn and to practice Islamic teachings. Easily accepted words that can convey the converts' hearts are very essential. Later, those might become the touching awareness and invitation to tight in Islam.

The preaching strategy applied by Islamic religious counselors must provide motivation and encouragement to know, to understand and to practice Islamic teachings. Motivation is always given in coaching to touch the hearts of converts. By providing continuous encouragement, it will raise awareness within the converts themselves. This can make a convert to have a desire in to deepen about Islam.

In carrying out preach activities, the counselors in Getas Village also use certain lecturing. It is in line with the interview with RM on June, 14, 2021 who stated states that the preaching method used was oral or lecture where Islamic religious counselors explains the delivered while the converts were listening. The activity was continued by question and answer. It was also

nemed as direct practice or *bil-hal*. In this practical activity, the Islamic religious counselors gave examples of the procedures in performing ablution, prayer movements and other rituals imitated by the converts.

The preaching method is one of the key successes in preaching Islam to converts in Getas Village through *da'wah*. Thus, coaching activities for converts can be maximized. In conducting coaching activities for converts, Islamic religious counselors seek to maximize in fostering converts by providing gradual and continuous guidance until they are able to carry out worship in Islam.

In addition, the preaching strategy carried out by Islamic religious counselors also provide financial assistance as business capital to improve the economy for converts with a grant model in accordance with the program from POKJALUH (a counselor program) of Temanggung Regency namely *Moderation Muallaf Mandiri* (Self moderation for converts). M in his interview on June 16, 2021 stated that that the provision of business funding assistance is one of the strategies carried out by Islamic religious counselors in maintaining converts not to be easily influenced by their former religion. In fact, there were some converts who are tempted by material seduction from their previous religion. To prevent this, Islamic religious counselors collaborated with BAZNAS of Temanggung Regency (Almsgiving organization) to implement the program including the improvement of economic skills for converts. The were provided with fund of Rp. 500,000-, as business capital.

Economic strengthening for converts will motivate converts to be loyal with Islam. For newcomers, their daily economic situations are sensitive in religious matters. It frequently happens that some of newcomers decide to go back to their previous belief as they miss out their economic support. They were abandoned by

their previous circle as they chose to embrace Islam as their new belief. Furthermore, economic strengthening is one of the preaching strategies to motivate converts' loyalties to be Islamic believers and be serious in studying and practicing Islamic teachings faithfully.

Thence, the objectives of the mentioned program covers: 1) increasing the understanding and practice of Islam in the daily moral skills (*fiqh*) of converts, 2) striving to increase tolerance practices and not unite between social and ritual groups, and 3) striving to increase the converts' economic independence.

The programs were implemented to enhance as well as to accelerate the converts daily basis understanding on Islam as their new religion. The programs must be on eyed directly by the religious counselors. Furthermore, the counselors must be ready to be facilitators for all questions asked by the converts. They became the first guardian to ask for helps when converts met problems while the ordinary people, other Muslims, could not strive to clarify the obstacles they found in field.

In implementing the empowerment program for converts in Getas Village, the preachers collaborated with BAZNAS of Temanggung Regency to establish Children Learning House (RBA). The program is an implementation practice strategy as in the theory of Wheleen and Hunger (in Taufiqurokhman, 2016: 28) which aims to provide free tutoring for Muslim children and children of converts. RM in his interview on June 14, 2021 stated that POKJALUH has collaborated with BAZNAS of Temanggung Regency to provide free tutoring for Muslim children and children from converts. These children were educated and provided learning guidance on Islam from an early age. The preachers were assisted by volunteer teachers from formal schools. It aimed at prioritizing the quality of education in a social activity package. The program

was run from 2 to 4 pm in the afternoon. The establishment of the Children Learning House (RBA) is intended to improve the quality of public education, especially for children in Getas Village. Besides that, it also supports changes in people's mindsets to prioritize education both formal and non-formal education.

By receiving financial support from BAZNAS of Temanggung Regency, the Islamic religious counselor carried out the *Mandiri Muallaf Program* (M.Tri) by implementing the faith strengthening and compensation for *muallaf* as a form of BAZNAS' concern for converts as one of the recipients. In addition to house for children learning, the next preaching strategy might provide compensation to converts continuous motivation to create a sense pride of Islam. In an interview with M on June 16, 2021, he stated that this compensation given to converts as a form of strategy to attract the attention. In this case, the preachers also provided motivation for converts to increase their enthusiasm for religion, especially learning about daily jurisprudence and strengthening faith. At last, they felt proud of and grateful for the guidance to continue to study religion.

The running program carried out by POKJALUH of Temanggung Regency, of course, cannot be separated from the evaluation and supervision stages. Wheleen and Hunger (in Taufiqurokhman, 2016: 28) stated that one of the stages of the strategy is to evaluate and supervise the actions taken by Islamic counselors. Accordingly, RM on June 14, 2021 stated that evaluation and supervision activities were very important and helped the counselors in providing guidance for converts in Getas Village. This evaluation was to seek on how far the development for the assisted converts and the running programs were in accordance with the objectives or otherwise. Therefore, evaluation and monitoring must be implemented.

To determine the success rate of the fostered converts, Islamic religious counselors always monitor the development of converts in studying and practicing Islamic teachings. One of them is by conducting continuous evaluation and monitoring. The results of the coaching were considered to be well running and there were visible changes for converts and the community. In an interview with Y, one of the assisted converts in Getas Village in accordance with Islamic teachings, he said that after converting to Islam, the heart became calmer and more peaceful. The surroundings had guided to worship in the prayer room. By following this training, it helped him in learning the religion of Islam, starting from performing prayers, cleaning procedures, and other Islamic knowledge.

The Field Reality of the Islamic Religious Counselors in Faith Strengthening the Faith for *Muallaf* in Kaloran, Temanggung, Central Java

Based on the research, the researchers obtained several findings that indicate the existence of supporting and inhibiting factors in carrying out coaching activities as efforts to maintain the faith for converts as follows:

a. Supporting factors as the *da'wah* strategy of preachers

1) Many converts who did not know about Islam

Based on research in the field, it can be seen that there were still many converts who did not know about Islam. They still needed a continuous process of fostering to maintain the faith of the converts themselves. They were also lack of willingness to study more about Islam by asking people whose knowledge on Islam was better than them. They were still think of being junior whose Islamic

teaching needed to be supported. However, they were passive to meet and ask other people. They were only waiting for the approach. Considering that converts as newcomers to Islam were still unstable and they were easily fragiled to return to their previous religion if they were not given continuous guidance.

2) The existence of marriages with different religions

Mixed-marriage is a common view in the society. Though, it needs a long debate between families involved the marriage. Parents are forced to agree the marriage to avoid another problem for future life of the children. They even must take a bow when the child they have reared decide to embrace a new religion following the spouse.

The phenomenon of different religion marriage frequently occurred in Getas Village, Kaloran District, Temanggung Regency. This became one of the driving factors for someone to convert. The distinctive marriage required an adjustment process to the new religion he believes in. In this case, converts still needed guidance related to strengthen the faith to create a strong faith belief from his spouse, relatives, counselor, and other muslims.

3) Environmental factors

The environment is one of the factors that supports a major influence on converts to make changes in accordance with the order of life. The converts who have stayed in the midst of a diversity of beliefs will be influenced to return to their previous religion. For this reason, Islamic preachers provided gradual guidance for converts to maintain their faith in accordance with Islamic teachings. Adjustment toward local people is also important.

The counselors need to understand the value system of the converts in order to avoid misunderstanding. Thus, adaptive strategy is needed. Ting-Toomey (in Ali, M., Arifin, W., & Muttaqien, Z., 2022) states that adaptive strategy achieves communication goals while avoiding miscommunication. This is done to avoid feeling of insecurity between two parties (Ali, M., Arifin, W., & Muttaqien, Z., 2022).

b. Inhibiting strategy of preaching

- 1) Lack of awareness of converts to learn and practice Islamic teachings in their daily life

The converts as newcomers in Islam required a lot of guidance particularly on the understanding of religious materials. It is merely because their faith was still relatively weak. A fast response must be flagged on. Here, it is adaptation. A long adaptation process was required to learn and practice the new teachings. One of the inhibiting factors for the assistance of converts to maintain their faith was the lack of awareness to know more about Islam. They were still regarding themselves as newcomers that needed extra time for the process on understanding Islam in detail. For the most part, converts in Getas Village have converted to Islam to meet a certain condition. For an example, a convert married to a Muslim woman. This phenomenon was a usual situation that drove a lovebird to be in a level with his/her love, a similar religion marriage. However, their awareness was still low to learn and practice the Islamic teachings in their daily life. Thus, Islamic counselors had tried to increase the converts' awareness by giving an interesting preaching.

- 2) Converts were easily influenced to return

to their previous religion

This situation should be taken into consideration. Though, it is about how human right speaks, noticing a new-believer return back to embrace their previous religion is shameful. To note, this is not only a responsibility of the counselor but also people who surround and feel cheerful when someone becomes a convert. The easiest way to do is giving support to converts in all situation. Their faiths are still fragile and certain situation can drive them neglect their newest statuses as Muslims. They need to be approached although they do not show it obviously. To minimize the occurrence of religious conversions to previous religions, Islamic religious counselors have sought to provide continuous assistance and motivation for converts such as trying to influence things with goodness in accordance to the Islamic teaching. The delivered material must be able to touch the hearts of converts. The material should be delivered in an interesting ways. Discussions on certain materials should be done with sophisticated explanation. Later, the converts had strong beliefs in Islam.

Involving other converts, senior converts, who had been longer in embracing Islam to support the new converts is also very substantial. These senior converts can present self-confidence for newcomers in understanding Islam deeply. Junior converts can learn strategies used by the senior ones. The fragile situation to return back to their previous religion need a precise strategy as considerations dealing with faith-related problems. Later, the faith strategies assist the converts and shape them into Islam loyalists whose confidence to be Muslim become bigger and bigger. The more the under-

stand Islam, the more to be loyalist they are.

The religious gathering is scheduled to invite other senior converts. The gathering is not only set up to increase the oase of Islamic nuance but also to strengthen the junior converts by the sharig of the senior ones about their experiences to be Muslims.

Giving spaces between the senior and the junior converts will enhance the communication. The tight will be a mutual relation to convey a positive insights. The seniors will not only be the one who are earlier in embracing Islam but also they are friends to talk and share with. The senior converts are regarded more familiar with problems on faith. They are already noticing on how to solve the problems. The problems' solutions turn to be strategies experienced by the senior converts become empowering statutes and references for the junior converts.

Frankly speaking, the communication between the senior and junior converts throung revealing the strategies on faith problems give aids for the junior to be loyal in Islam. The severe faith situation that is frequently experienced by a convert can be diminished. In future, the converts can redefine their choice to be a true muslim who are ready for all situations that can interfere their choice to muslim. He can bear his own strategy to be revealed when the problem strikes and insists him to make a new definition about Islam in a precise undertanding.

3) Economic factors

Economic needs are everything that humans must be able to maintain in lives to obtain comfortness. This economic factor is one of the obstacles in carrying out the guidance for converts, especially for converts whose econ-

omy was in middle to lower level that they were still quite unstable as a new believer. Economic empowerment is a crucial mattter to take into consideration. This is a sensitive if this is closely related to a newcomer who embraces as he chooses Islam because of a fragile decision such as a marriage.

It is far from recently phenomenon where many converts embrace Islam as they receive calls from Alloh Almighty. They have studied more about Islam based on their own awareness. Mostly they are entrepreneurs whose economic situations are huge and wealthy. Frankly speaking, they are quite mature when they decide to choose Islam. Many Chinese-based entrepreneurs are willing to embrace Islam and they establish a movement called Muslim Tionghoa Unity (*Persatuan Muslim Tionghoa*). Some of these prevailing Chinese Muslims are Felix Siau, Koko Liem, Anton Medan, Yusuf Hamka, and many others.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the preaching strategy carried out by Islamic religious counselors in an effort to maintain the value of the converts' faith in Getas Village were implemented in four stages. Those were environmental analysis, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and evaluation or monitor. Each strategy should hand in hand and well-applied. Generally speaking, they were applied to train the fostered converts to have a better understanding on Islamic teachings, the newest religion the believe in. The strategies include: 1) approaching converts to Islam by establishing a *taklim* assembly (religious gathering) as a means of preaching and communication to establish good relations with converts in conveying preaching messages, 2) establishing the learning facilities named Children Learning

Houses (RBA) by providing free tutoring and reciting the Qur'an to converts and the rest Muslims in Getas Village, 3) motivating the fostered converts using the *bil-lisan* (oral preaching) and *bil-hal da'wah* (action preaching) methods, and 4) strengthening the economy of converts by implementing *Mandiri Muallaf Moderation Program* (M-tri). However, there were inhibiting and supporting factors experienced by the religious counselors in maintaining the faith values delivered for converts. For this reason, Islamic religious counselors are expected to maximize Islamic religious development activities for converts in improving religious understanding with appropriate preaching strategies and methods. These strategies and methods will vary from another place as the segmented target is also different. The best path to execute these ways is by noticing the need assessment of the converts. This should be taken into consideration as the type of converts cannot be generalized. It is noted to be a better choice to have a discussion or depth conversation about the strategies and methods between counselors and converts. An individual approach also very important to do as not all converts have high confidence dealing with faith problems. The counselor might provide time and space for the intimate discussion with the converts. Providing examples from other converts situation that set the achievement is also crucial to open the convert broadened-mind about Islam. Thus, religious counselors must be creative in seeking attention and appreciation from the converts. In future, the converts' faith

condition can reach a remarkable achievement to be a true muslim.

The counselors must play roles as monitor, evaluator, preacher, friend to share with, and supporter for converts in enhancing the faith condition of these newcomers. The relation among this two parties is very crucial as well as the contribution of other muslims (also senior converts) to contribute the converts to be true muslims.

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