



Initiating Christian Religious Extension with a Cultural Insight In Indonesian Cultural Perspective

Lidwina Lestari^{1*}, Agnes Novianti Permata Sari²

Religious Extension Education Study Program, Tarutung State Christian Institute.

***Corresponding Author**
Lidwina Lestari

Religious Extension Education
Study Program, Tarutung State
Christian Institute.

Article History

Received: 28.11.2023

Accepted: 18.12.2023

Published: 05.01.2024

Abstract: *Christian religious instructors in providing counseling to their assisted residents must prepare themselves well, especially when extension workers enter new areas. This preparation is to get to know the culture in the target area, this makes the religious instructors have to have good cultural knowledge so that the counseling can be accepted by the assisted residents in the area. This study aims to: examine the knowledge of culture for religious instructors. The research method is qualitative with a descriptive approach. Data collection techniques were carried out through literature study as literature material that can present data and is accompanied by supporting documents which are important references in this study. The results of the research show that a cultured Christian instructor is someone who has expertise in teaching the teachings of Christianity to the community and has extensive knowledge of the local culture in the area where they work. In their duties, cultured Christian religious instructors do not only focus on theological and doctrinal aspects of Christianity, but also pay attention to how these religious values can be adapted to local culture. This aims to make the teachings of Christianity more easily understood and accepted by the local community.*

Keywords: *Religious instructor, culture.*

1. Introduction

Indonesia has many kinds of religions, the religions in Indonesia are Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. The religion professed by the Indonesian people themselves regulates belief and worship of the God they believe in. The application of religion can also be influenced by local customs, which govern beliefs and worship of God (or the like) as well as rules relating to customs and worldviews that connect humans with the order of life (Naibaho, 2022).

Religion is a belief system based on sacred and supernatural values that can indirectly guide human behavior, teach the meaning of life, and create solidarity with fellow individuals. So that religion teaches good things that govern the religious community itself.

Indonesian people who have a variety of religions need role models in carrying out religion, role models are usually used as examples of religion in people's daily lives. Religious figures and religious leaders are role models and examples to followers of their respective religions. Religious leaders teach their religion according to the scriptures of their respective religions. Even though religion teaches good things, there are still individuals or groups of people who are religious who practice deviations from religious rules and teachings, such as theft, gambling, drugs, murder, domestic violence, radicalism and other criminal acts.

Data for the last five years shows that juvenile delinquency, divorce rates, violence against children, poverty, terrorism, cults, and various criminal acts are increasing and increasingly varied. In

addition, the divorce rate in Indonesia is increasing day by day, there has even been an increase from 60,000 per year before the reformation to 200,000 per year after the reformation as well as the suicide rate which has not decreased significantly. (Jaya, 2017: 336).

From this incident, apart from the community's religious leaders, they also need other role models or professions formed by the government to address social and religious problems, this profession is religious counselors. religious instructors can go directly to the community and study the community from existing community problems and teach or provide intense religious counseling to the community. In the context of fostering one's mental, morals, and piety to God Almighty, religious instructors play an important role as mentors for individuals and religious groups.

Based on the decision of the minister of religion No. 79 of 1985 the term religious instructor was used to replace the term "honorary religious teacher" as well as presidential decree No. 87 of 1999 explaining that extension workers belong to a religious family, namely the functional group of civil servants and have tasks related to research and development of operational concepts, theories and methods as well as implementation of technical activities related to the spiritual and moral development of the community in accordance with the religion they adhere to (Nainggolan dalam Novianti et al., 2022: 231).

Based on the Decree of the Coordinating Minister for Wasbang and PAN Number 54 (in Munawiroh, 2014: 231) Religious instructors are a form of activity unit that has strategic

value in the implementation of development in the field of religion. Religious instructors have important role in the life of religion, society and state, among others as a role model and as a connector of government duties. Religious instructors can also act as interpreters, lamps in the midst of darkness, who provide enlightenment and teach wisdom to the surrounding community. Each religion has an instructor to be responsible as a community educator and make the community a good religious society.

Christian religious instructor is someone who is given the task, responsibility and authority by the authorized official to carry out religious guidance and development counseling through the language of Christianity. According to Mustain (in Novianti et al., 2022:232) the functions of Christian religious instructors are Informative and Educative Functions: positioning themselves as extension workers who are obliged to preach the Word of God, convey religious information and educate people to live according to God's will, administrative functions: has the duty to plan, report and evaluate the implementation of counseling and guidance that has been carried out, consultative function: participate in thinking about and solving problems faced by the community, both personal, family or community problems in general and are willing to open eyes and ears to the problems faced people as well as being a place to ask questions and a place to complain about the community in an effort to solve and resolve problems so that Christian Religion Extensionists function as psychologists, and friends to share feelings, advocative functions: have a moral and social responsibility to carry out activities to defend the people/community from various threats, disturbances, obstacles and challenges to issues of social justice, handling of splinter currents, problems related to harmony among people both within religious communities, between religious communities, and between religious communities and the government which so far have not been able to be accommodated and have not received handling properly.

Christian religious instructors must have inmates that they mentor and religious instructors must be able to take their attention so that the inmates can be fostered properly and the inmates give their time in religious counseling. In order to get the attention of the inmates, religious instructors must be able to adapt to the environment and culture of the inmates they will mentor, therefore, knowledge of culture for religious instructors is very important so that each extension agent is able to adapt to the inmates they are fostering, whether with the same culture or not, with different cultures.

2. Method

The research method used is a qualitative research method by collecting data through library research as literature material that can present data and is accompanied by supporting documents which are important references in this study. Each article or literature used is checked for relevance by looking at the suitability of the focus of the discussion. This paper also uses a descriptive-qualitative method. The qualitative descriptive method is a method of qualitatively describing existing conditions, data in the form of a series of expressions through precise and systematic interpretation (Wibowo, 2011). The use of this method aims to describe objects in detail and depth. As for what is meant by descriptive research, namely a research simply to describe an object with regard to the problem under study without questioning the relationship between

objects. Qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written/oral words from people and observed behavior (A'Ing, 2015:554).

3. Results and Discussion

Culture

Culture comes from the Sanskrit word *buddhayah*. *Buddhayah* is the plural form of *buddhi* which means "mind" or "reason". Thus culture can be interpreted: "things related to reason". There are other scholars who examine the word culture as a development from the compound word *cultivation* which means "power and mind". Because of that they distinguish "culture" and "cultured". Thus "culture" is power and mind in the form of creativity, intention and taste. Meanwhile, "cultured" is the result of creativity, initiative and taste. (Koentjaraningrat, 2015: 146)

Culture according to Linton (in Situmeang & Hutahae, 2021: 240) is a configuration of learned behavior and results of behavior whose elements are used together and transmitted by members of the community. Furthermore, Jenks (in dalam Situmeang & Hutahae, 2021: 240) says culture is the whole way of life of a group and presents a condition of intellectual and moral development in society.

There are three forms of human culture, namely: 1) the form of culture as a complex of ideas, ideas, values, regulatory norms and so on. 2) The form of culture as a complex of patterned activities and actions of humans in society. 3) the form of culture as objects created by humans. (Koentjaraningrat, 2015: 150).

In everyday life, culture is embedded in their lives where culture forms the identity of the community through the customs they hold. Culture can be regarded as forming the identity of each community group which makes each community group have its own characteristics from other community groups so that culture provides boundaries for one community group to another. Culture also shapes the behavior and attitudes of each community from the rules, norms, values and customs of that culture. Culture as social control that directs people to live in an orderly manner from the rules and norms that are formed. Culture can also be a medium of communication for the people.

Cultural knowledge is also very much needed by extension workers who will carry out counseling because not all of the inmates who are extension workers have the same culture as extension workers, therefore extension workers must have good cultural knowledge so that the counseling can be accepted and run well.

Christian Religion Counselor

Religious counseling is a form of activity unit that has strategic value in the implementation of development in the religious field. Religious instructors carry out and develop religious and development guidance or counseling activities through religious language. They are given full duties, responsibilities and authorities to carry out religious guidance and development counseling activities through religious language. (Munawiroh, 2014: 223-224)

The duties and functions of religious instructors are listed in the Joint Decree of the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia Number 574 of 1999, namely carrying out religious and development guidance or counseling activities through religious language and also in essence there are 4 tasks carried out by

religious instructors, namely: 1) guiding people in carrying out religious teachings, 2) conveying development ideas to the community using religious language, 3) increasing harmony in religious life, and 4) Participating in the success of the Ministry of Religion's program (in Novianti et al., 2022: 232).

The Meaning of Culture in the Context of a Culturally Insighted Instructor

Because the scientific foundation of extension is also anchored in psychology, discussion of extension issues in a cultural context cannot be separated from discussing culture in a psychological context.

There are several characteristics of culture in the context of psychology, namely; (1) Culture as an abstract concept; cultural aspects that can be observed are actually not culture itself but differences in human behavior in activities and actions, thoughts, rituals, traditions, and materials as products of human behavior, (2) Culture as a conceptual group; culture exists when there is a meeting between humans, in which it will produce adaptation patterns in behavior, norms, beliefs, as well as thoughts and or ideas, and (3) culture is internalized by group members; culture is a product that is guided by individuals who are put together in a group, then culture is a binding tool for individuals who give the characteristics of membership in a group that is different from individuals from other cultural groups (Putra, Padmasari, 2020).

Culture as an individual and social construct contains a cultural value system (cultural value system) and in the context of psychology with a cultural perspective, cultural value systems is the basis of attitudes and behavior. According to Koentjaraningrat, the cultural value system is the highest and most abstract level of customs. Cultural values are concepts about something that lives in the minds of most of the citizens of a society. Cultural values are things that they consider valuable, valuable, and important for life. The cultural value system serves as a guideline that can provide direction and orientation for people's lives. Human behavior as a member of society will be bound by culture which can be seen in various institutions, which function as a control mechanism for human behavior.

Cultural Insight Extension

A cultured Christian religious instructor is someone who has expertise in teaching the teachings of Christianity to the public. What differentiates them from ordinary Christian religious instructors is that they have extensive knowledge of the local culture in the area where they work. In their duties, cultured Christian religious instructors do not only focus on theological and doctrinal aspects of Christianity, but also pay attention to how these religious values can be adapted to local culture. This aims to make the teachings of Christianity more easily understood and accepted by the local community.

The importance of cultural understanding for a Christian religious instructor, namely: 1) Helping to understand the way of life of people who are the target of Christian religious counseling, so that extension workers can develop appropriate and relevant approaches in conveying Christian religious teachings, 2) Helping convey Christian religious teachings contextually, namely by considering the culture, traditions, and norms that exist in society. This is very important because people's culture and traditions can influence the way people understand and accept Christian religious teachings, 3) Helps avoid misunderstandings and interpretations of

Christian religious teachings that can occur if people don't consider the culture and context of society. This can help avoid conflicts that might arise if the teachings of Christianity are deemed incompatible with the cultural values and traditions of the community, and 4) Increase the effectiveness of Christian counseling, because by taking into account the culture and context of society, extension workers can develop more effective counseling strategies and right on target. With a good understanding of culture for an instructor, the extension process can run in any area, whether the population is homogeneous or heterogeneous.

The qualification of a cultured Christian religious instructor is an instructor who behaves in a culture, where the instructor implements culture in his daily habits so that it can be said that the instructor knows his own culture. Religious instructors must understand and respect the local culture, customs and traditions in the area where they work so that the extension worker can get to know the people they work with from their culture. Religious educators must understand cultural and religious differences and be able to integrate the two harmoniously. Religious instructors are able to relate Christian religious teachings to local culture. Religious instructors are able to convey Christian teachings in local languages that are easily understood by the local community so that the counseling can be understood by the assisted community from the counseling. Religious instructors must also not be ethnocentric, which does not differentiate between cultures and considers their culture to be better than other people's cultures.

Religious instructors can understand the culture of the local community by observing the area to be enlightened and then studying the habits of the people, if you want to go deeper you can do it with in-depth research, then interact and communicate with local residents, learn the local language then study the history and background of the community local people, then follow the ethics, norms, rules and customs of the local community, then get help and acceptance from local residents so that after receiving a response from local residents, extension workers can open their minds, share experiences and provide Bible teaching from counseling conducted by religious instructors.

References

1. A'Ing, A. (2015). Studi Tentang Pembangunan Bidang Pendidikan di Daerah Perbatasan Kecamatan Kayan Hulu Kabupaten Malinau. *Pemerintahan Integratif*, 3(4), 545–559.
2. Jaya, P. H. (2017). Revitalisasi Peran Penyuluhan Agama dalam FUNgsinnya.. *Jurnal Bim....*, 8(2), 335–356.
3. Koentjaraningrat. (2015). *Pengantar Ilmu antropologi*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta. Munawiroh, M. (2014). Peran Pendidikan Dalam Penyuluhan Agama Di Masyarakat. *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, 12(2), 223–233. <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v12i2.84>
4. Naibaho, D., Harianja, S. D., Simorangkir, J., & Sinambela, M. (2022). Fostering fraternity in humanity: the Church's efforts to bring compassion within the framework of religious moderation. *Kurios*, 8(1), 94. <https://doi.org/10.30995/kur.v8i1.537>

5. Novianti, A., Sari, P., Ihut, H., Simamora, T., Dewi, H., Karina, E. D., & Sipahutar, M. A. (2022). Peningkatan Kompetensi Penyuluh Agama di Kabupaten Toba Melalui Pelatihan Komunikasi yang Efektif dan Efisien, 2(2), 229–239.
6. Putra, N. P., Padmasari, V., (2020). The Importance of Fostering the Ethics of Christianity. *Academia.Edu*, 2(1).
7. Situmeang, D. M., & Hutahae, A. N. permata sari. (2021). Mata Guru Roha Sisean: Berpikir Kritis dalam Mengambil Keputusan Berdasarkan Ungkapan Batak Toba dan Kristiani. *Journal of Education, Humaniora and Social Sciences (JEHSS)*, 4(1), 239–246. <https://doi.org/10.34007/jehss.v4i1.557>
8. Wibowo, W. (2011). *Cara Cerdas Menulis Artikel Ilmiah*. Jakarta.