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MORALITY BEFORE KNOWLEDGE

Social da'wah of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Bekasi City in preventing interfaith conflicts

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ABSTRACT

Background: Religious conflicts in Bekasi City, such as the cases of HKBP in Ciketing Asem (2010) and Santa Clara church in North Bekasi (2017), reflect social tensions that threaten community harmony. This study aims to examine the role of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of Bekasi City in social dakwah in reducing conflict, identifying conflict actors, and formulating effective prevention strategies. The theory used is Stephen Littlejohn's moral conflict theory combined with the Islamic concept of social conflict. **Methods**: This research uses a transdisciplinary approach by combining Western theories of moral conflict and Islamic concepts related to da'wah and social conflict. Islamic concepts such as iftiraaq (divide and conquer) and ikhtilaf (dispute) are analysed in the context of social conflict taken from several Quranic verses. Data were collected through literature review and analysis of MUI's role in social da'wah efforts and conflict resolution. **Findings**: This research found that social conflicts with religious backgrounds in Bekasi City stem from two main factors. Firstly, the conflict comes from the moral aspect of individuals who do not want the social order to run well. Second, there is external interference that imposes its interests even though it is against the will of the local community. MUI plays a role in reducing conflict through social da'wah, but the challenges in overcoming individual morals and external disturbances are still significant. **Conclusion**: Religious conflict in Bekasi City is a serious threat to social stability. MUI Bekasi City plays an important role in reducing tensions through social da'wah, but a more comprehensive prevention strategy is needed to address moral conflicts and external disturbances. **Novelty/Originality of this article**: This research offers a transdisciplinary approach that combines Western moral conflict theory and Islamic concepts of dakwah and social conflict. This provides a new perspective in understanding religious conflict in Indonesia and formulating relevant prevention strategies in the context of MUI's social da'wah.

KEYWORDS: da'wah; iftiraaq; ikhtilaf; religious conflict; social conflict.

1. Introduction

In recent years, Bekasi City has faced significant challenges related to horizontal conflicts, particularly among religious groups and social organizations. Notable incidents, such as the disputes over church construction, have captured international attention, highlighting the complexities of interfaith relations in the area. The conflicts involving the Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) church in Ciketing Asem village in 2010 and the Santa Clara church in North Bekasi District in 2017 exemplify the tensions between Islamic

organizations and Christian congregations. These confrontations often escalate into physical and open clashes, revealing deep-seated issues within the community. The involvement of various religious organizations further complicates the dynamics, indicating a pressing need for dialogue and understanding among different faiths.

Additionally, other incidents, such as the establishment of the Galilee Galaxi Church and the Kalibaru church construction dispute, contribute to the ongoing atmosphere of conflict in Bekasi. Scholars, including Vandyarman Mulya Priyanda and others, have conducted case study research to analyze these recurring events, revealing a pattern of unresolved tensions. Their findings suggest that the local government's efforts to mitigate these conflicts have been less than effective, often failing to address the root causes. Recommendations from such studies have pointed to the importance of early detection, prevention, and rehabilitation of potential conflicts. However, these solutions often remain theoretical, as they do not tackle the deeper moral conflicts that underlie these disputes.

The persistence of these conflicts can be attributed to the communal ethnic and cultural characteristics of Bekasi's society, which exacerbate tensions and prolong disagreements. Many of the issues stem from differing values and beliefs that create an environment ripe for misunderstanding and hostility. The difficulty in implementing conflict resolution strategies underscores the necessity for a more comprehensive approach that addresses both the symptoms and root causes of these disputes. Fostering open communication and encouraging collaboration among diverse community members are essential steps toward achieving lasting peace. Ultimately, addressing the moral and cultural dimensions of conflict in Bekasi City is crucial for moving beyond mere recommendations to create a more harmonious society.

The then mayor and deputy mayor of Bekasi, Mochtar Mohamad and Rahmat Effendi, called for restraint from both parties involved in the ongoing conflict. They urged the Muslim community to place their trust in local government efforts to mediate and resolve the disputes amicably. At the same time, church congregations were encouraged to avoid constructing churches in predominantly Muslim areas to prevent future conflicts from arising. This approach aimed to foster a sense of cooperation and mutual respect among diverse religious groups within the city. However, these calls for restraint were merely a starting point; they highlighted the need for a more structured resolution framework to address the underlying issues at play.

To effectively resolve conflicts, it is essential to adopt a comprehensive resolution approach that involves key stakeholders in the community. Every step of the conflict resolution process must be carefully planned, systematic, and measurable, ensuring that the outcomes contribute to social order and inter-religious harmony. By employing a strategic approach, it is possible to cultivate an environment where different faiths can coexist peacefully and collaboratively. This requires a commitment from all parties to engage in constructive dialogue and to seek common ground. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of actively addressing grievances and misunderstandings to prevent escalation.

Optimizing the role of development stakeholders is critical for the success of horizontal conflict resolution in Bekasi City. Local government leaders, including the Regional Head and the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), alongside community organizations and the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), must collaborate to strengthen their conflict resolution efforts. MUI leaders, in particular, hold significant influence as community representatives within governmental institutions and can serve as key mediators in peace initiatives. Their involvement is crucial for early detection of potential conflicts and for facilitating discussions between conflicting parties. By fostering a collaborative approach among these stakeholders, Bekasi City can create a more resilient framework for maintaining peace and harmony among its diverse communities.

The optimization of the role of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) in Bekasi can be significantly enhanced due to its strong presence in both social and cultural contexts. MUI's structural involvement in strategic policy-making allows it to influence local regulations directly, which is essential for fostering community cohesion. Moreover, MUI's capacity for direct persuasion is crucial in engaging conflict actors, as its leaders often possess the

respect and trust of local communities. This positions MUI as a vital mediator in conflicts, enabling it to advocate for peaceful resolutions that align with Islamic principles. Strengthening MUI's role can therefore facilitate a more harmonious coexistence among various religious and social groups.

Efforts to address conflict issues in Bekasi have included identifying potential conflicts through Development Planning Consultation (Musrenbang) activities conducted on a regular basis. These consultations aim to gather community aspirations and address local problems, but their implementation has often fallen short of expectations. One significant challenge is the limited involvement of stakeholders, which primarily includes only regional leadership, encompassing both executive and legislative branches. This restricted participation undermines the effectiveness of the Musrenbang program, as it does not adequately reflect the broader community's needs and aspirations. Consequently, the lack of diverse input hampers the development of comprehensive solutions to existing conflicts.

To enhance the effectiveness of Musrenbang, it is essential to shift from a top-down model of normative aspiration gathering to one that encourages genuine community interaction and active participation. Currently, the reliance on a top-down approach limits the local government's ability to engage meaningfully with community members, often reducing their role to mere recipients of directives. By creating opportunities for dialogue and collaboration, local government can foster a more inclusive planning process that reflects the true needs of the community. Such a shift would empower residents, allowing them to actively contribute to identifying and solving the issues they face. Ultimately, adopting a more participatory model can lead to more sustainable conflict resolution and a stronger sense of community ownership over local governance processes.

The current pattern of community participation in local governance has proven to be ineffective, despite still operating within the agenda-setting framework. Local governments have begun to recognize the necessity of evolving this model by actively involving community members as sources of information regarding on-ground issues. This shift not only accommodates valuable input and aspirations into development programs but also enhances the overall responsiveness of local governance to community needs. Furthermore, the inclusion of media as a channel for information dissemination plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between the government and the community, ensuring that concerns are communicated effectively. By fostering a more dynamic and inclusive approach, local governments can cultivate a stronger sense of collaboration and trust with their constituents, ultimately leading to more effective and relevant development outcomes.

Another function of Musrenbang is to be a forum for discussing various social problems that are happening in the community. MUI as a religious-based organisation as well as a social-community organisation, has full access in the effort to resolve horizontal conflicts that occur. Although it was established as a Muslim organisation, MUI performs the function of people's glue through religious education, social-community, and cultural system strengthening. MUI can play a role in cultural acculturation efforts in a society with heterogeneous characteristics. Cultural acculturation is a humanistic movement that is able to dissolve egocentric and sectarian territories. Because the Bekasi City community is pluralistic, mutual respect for other cultures must continue to be campaigned for so that the order of Bekasi City can be harmonised campaigned so that social order runs well.

This research addresses the critical question of how the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of Bekasi City actively works to mitigate religious conflicts within the region. Utilizing a qualitative study with a case study approach, the investigation delves into the various strategies employed by MUI to foster harmony among diverse religious communities. A significant focus of the research is on the social preaching activities conducted by MUI, which aim to promote unity and understanding among citizens. These activities are designed to create a social system that not only acknowledges but also respects and honors the rich diversity of religions, beliefs, and cultures present in Bekasi City. By engaging in these efforts, MUI seeks to cultivate an environment of mutual respect and cooperation, ultimately contributing to the reduction of tensions and the enhancement of social cohesion in the community.

2. Literature Study

2.1 Theoretical foundation

Conflict is a natural aspect of relationships, often arising from differing desires and goals among partners, friends, family members, co-workers, and neighbors. While managing these conflicts can be challenging, effective communication patterns can facilitate the resolution of differences. However, it is important to recognize that some conflicts cannot be resolved quickly or easily. Moral conflicts, in particular, occur when deeply held philosophical beliefs clash, making them more complex to navigate. To address this, Barnett Pearce and Stephen Littlejohn developed moral conflict theory, which explains how such conflicts arise and highlights the characteristics that reinforce and perpetuate differences (Littlejohn, 2017).

For Pearce and Littlejohn, personal actions are always based on a moral order. Moral orders are assumptions about the world: 'what is real, how we know reality and what is true. That is, the moral order is the set of ideas that we rely on to understand the world and what happens in it. is our common sense understanding of the nature of the world. This moral order is sometimes the basis for moral differences. When one person's moral order clashes with another person's moral order, then fundamental differences will be apparent. A classic example of a moral difference is the pro-life/pre-choice of abortion on pregnant women, the legality of which differs greatly from one another. One position is based on when life begins and religious doctrine, while the other emphasises personal freedom of choice and medical science, Pearce and Littlejohn describe them as incommensurable moral orders. Incommensurable means that moral orders cannot be directly compared with each other because beliefs about reality and right and wrong are at different levels. They are simply different systems of different systems of understanding the world.

Pearce and Littlejohn identify several patterns that characterize moral conflict, revealing its complexity and the challenges involved in resolution. One prominent pattern is the differing use of language by the parties involved; although they may employ the same terms, these words carry distinct meanings for each side, leading to misunderstandings. Additionally, individuals often feel trapped within the conflict, perceiving themselves as having no alternative but to continue fighting. Attempts to resolve the conflict can sometimes worsen the situation, as the belief that ongoing dialogue will foster understanding and lead to resolution is often misguided in the context of moral disagreements. In fact, increased communication can escalate tensions and deepen divisions, highlighting the need for more nuanced approaches to conflict resolution that consider the unique dynamics of moral conflicts.

Environmentalists and business developers provide a clear example of moral conflict in action. Both groups may talk about sustainability, but they use the word differently in the first example of communication patterns. Environmental advocates focus on ensuring environmental sustainability, and business people emphasise employment and development to ensure a sustainable economy, environmental advocates raise money and take developers to court to block development efforts because they want to protect the environment. The environmental advocates raise money and take developers to court to block development efforts because they feel that if they do so, then they will do the same. if they do not stand up and fight back, the environment will suffer.

In the process of interaction between conflicting parties, the situation often deteriorates, leading to heightened tensions and mutual frustration. As businesspeople become aware of the perceived 'radical' nature of environmentalists, the latter, in turn, discern the 'ruthlessness' of the business community. This dynamic fosters a communication environment characterized by entrenched positions, where both sides become firmly rooted in their beliefs. Such entrenchment contributes to the emergence of

intractable conflicts—those that persist over extended periods with no apparent resolution in sight. Additionally, the conflicts become morally debilitating, as participants may begin to compromise their own ethical standards, justifying actions that deviate from their moral codes.

Moral conflicts often result in actions that starkly contrast with the parties' fundamental beliefs, leading to morally attenuated behavior. For instance, a radical environmentalist may resort to vandalism, such as destroying a tree, which damages a developer's property, all while feeling justified in their actions. Similarly, individuals from differing religious backgrounds may express hateful sentiments toward one another over contentious issues like abortion, undermining their moral foundations. Furthermore, as conflicts escalate and sophisticated arguments are dismissed, participants may resort to rhetorical inelegance, employing simplistic and unsophisticated strategies such as name-calling, chanting, and slogans. These tactics not only fail to advance the discourse but also exacerbate the divide, making resolution increasingly elusive and deepening the emotional chasm between the conflicting parties.

In the realm of moral conflict, one party often struggles to comprehend why the other fails to acknowledge the validity of their arguments, leading to the perception that the opposing side must be stupid, ignorant, wrong, or even evil. This lack of understanding can exacerbate the situation, as increased communication between the parties tends to reinforce and reconstruct existing differences rather than bridge them. The nature of their interactions is characterized by low-quality dialogue, often focused on advocating for their positions with the intent to defeat the other side. Consequently, instead of fostering a constructive exchange of ideas, the communication becomes more combative, entrenching the divide between them. This theory highlights how everyday communication practices contribute to the construction of differences, ultimately impacting the sense of community and understanding among the parties involved.

Symbolic interactionism, as proposed by Littlejohn, emphasizes the significance of symbols in binding the social system together, encompassing three key aspects. First, knowledge is derived from the interpretation of symbols, which serve as vital information within social interactions. Unlike structuralist theories that perceive social structure as a determining factor, symbolic interactionism views social structures as products of interaction among individuals. This perspective shifts the focus of observation away from rigid structures to the dynamic ways in which language and symbols are employed to create and shape social frameworks. Furthermore, it examines how these symbols are produced, maintained, and transformed through their usage in various contexts, highlighting the fluid nature of social relationships and structures (Littlejohn, 2017).

The two theories above are used by researchers as a guide in looking at the phenomenon of socio-religious conflict in Bekasi City. Although the conflict has subsided, the potential for conflict still exists because the pattern of handling carried out by a number of stakeholders, including MUI Bekasi City, is still within the limits of case by case so that it does not shape the problem holistically. One of the reasons is that the optimisation of the role of religious leaders and community leaders has not been done well. In addition, the discussion about religious conflicts has not been at the stage of reconstruction and rehabilitation.

2.2 Conceptual frame

Moral conflicts, as outlined in the theory, are profound and often challenging to resolve. Within the Islamic context, these conflicts can be understood through the concepts of ikhtilaf, meaning dispute, and iftiraaq (or tafarraqu), which signifies division or separation. This notion is illustrated in QS. Al Imran (3:103), which states, "And hold fast all of you to the rope (religion) of Allah, and do not be divided," reminding believers of the importance of unity and brotherhood fostered by divine intervention. Similarly, QS. Al Imran (3:105) warns against becoming like those who divide and dispute after clear guidance has been

given, highlighting the severe consequences of such discord. These verses emphasize that without government intervention to mediate conflicts, communities are prone to divisions. In communication studies, escalating conflicts often lead to stronger group identities among the masses while undermining the authority of organizational leaders (Faisal, 2000). The resulting iktilaf and iftiraaq do not promote optimism for mutually beneficial resolutions; instead, they create a state of mafsadah that threatens the stability and order of society..

Strengthening the da'wah of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) in Bekasi City must focus not only on external outreach but also on internal optimization. Effective leadership within the organization is crucial, requiring the involvement of figures from diverse backgrounds to reflect institutional integrity. The orientation of da'wah should align with the aspirations and expectations of the ummah. As Ibn Aqil noted, da'wah is a human endeavor that promotes goodness and prevents harm, even when such actions have not been explicitly practiced by the Prophet or detailed in revelation (Qardhawi, 2008). Furthermore, the prohibition against disputes is emphasized in QS. Al-An'fal (8:46), which warns, "And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute, so that you may be dismayed and lose your strength." This verse underscores that disputes leading to a loss of unity are detrimental to society, and if left unaddressed, they can cause significant harm rather than benefit. To foster this unity, MUI can implement various development programs that promote interfaith collaboration, such as social services and interfaith dialogues aimed at addressing the social challenges faced by communities in Bekasi City.

The concept of Islam within the framework of symbolic interaction theory can be illuminated through several verses from the Qur'an, such as QS. Ar-Rum: 21, QS. Al-Maidah: 2, and QS. Al-'Araf: 156, which provide guidelines for social interaction. For instance, the verse "And among the signs of His greatness is that He created for you mates of your own kind, that you may be inclined to them and feel secure in them, and that He may create in you love and affection. Indeed, in such there are signs (of Allah's greatness) for those who think" emphasizes the importance of companionship and love in fostering social bonds. Additionally, the verse "And help each other in (doing) righteousness and piety, and do not help each other in sin and enmity" underscores the need for mutual support in positive endeavors while discouraging collaboration in harmful actions. These principles highlight the responsibility of Muslim organizations to act as both leaders and cohesive forces within the community. Specifically, the role and function of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) as a religious and social organization become evident; MUI is tasked with educating the ummah, promoting mutual respect among its members, and facilitating interfaith dialogue to mitigate social conflicts at the community level.

The concept of al-ummah is instrumental in addressing horizontal conflicts within religious contexts. Within various strands of Islamic political thought, this concept is closely tied to tabanni mashâlih al-ummah (TMU), which translates to "the benefits of the people." This principle allows Islamic organizations to advocate for the rights and benefits that the community may not fully experience or that may be denied by other entities, particularly governmental authorities (Kurnia, 2005). By focusing on the collective well-being of the ummah, these organizations can mobilize support and raise awareness around issues affecting the community. TMU emphasizes a holistic approach to benefits, encompassing both immediate and broader societal concerns.

The benefits advocated under TMU can take on various forms, ranging from localized issues to overarching societal challenges. For instance, specific concerns may include the establishment of houses of worship, the right to practice one's faith freely, and issues like fuel prices that directly impact daily living. In addition, TMU addresses more systemic problems such as secular education, foreign intervention, and the economic challenges posed by foreign debt. Moreover, it highlights the plight of marginalized groups, such as street vendors (PKL), who often face obstacles in their right to earn a living. At a broader level, TMU seeks to rectify community rights infringements, exemplified by agrarian conflicts arising from industrial and mining developments, thereby reinforcing the need for collective advocacy and action within the ummah.

3. Methods

3.1 Paradigm

This research represents an interdisciplinary study that seeks to merge Da'wah Science, rooted in Islamic tradition, with the discipline of Communication Science. By employing a critical paradigm, this study draws from the insights of critical theory, which posits that contradictions, pressures, and conflicts are inherent elements of social norms. Critical theory, influenced by Marxist thought, focuses on identifying social conditions that lead to dominance and oppression, emphasizing the need for analysis and critique of societal structures. Through this lens, the research examines how Da'wah practices can be understood and communicated within broader social contexts, acknowledging that these practices often occur amid complex social dynamics. This integration of disciplines allows for a richer understanding of both Da'wah Science and Communication Science, fostering dialogue between them.

Discourse plays a crucial role in this study as it serves as a systematic framework for articulating judgments and validating claims. In the realm of discourse, truth is established through theoretical arguments that rely heavily on evidence. When disputes arise concerning the validity of certain claims, practical discourse becomes essential, emphasizing established norms and standards. This approach highlights that knowledge is often contested, subject to debate until a consensus is reached, thus reflecting the evolving nature of understanding within both disciplines (Littlejohn, 2017). By critically engaging with these discourses, the research aims to uncover the complexities surrounding Da'wah and its implications within the field of communication, ultimately contributing to a more nuanced understanding of these intertwined domains.

3.2 Approach

This research employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing a case study design to explore its objectives. As field research, it aligns with Bogdan's (1993) definition, emphasizing the collection of data directly from real-world settings. The findings generated from such fieldwork encompass a range of insights, including ideas, thoughts, criticisms, and suggestions, allowing for a rich understanding of the studied phenomena. In this context, the researcher plays a crucial role in critically interpreting the behaviors and actions of individuals and groups who serve as the research subjects. Consequently, the presentation of the data processing results takes the form of descriptive analysis, aimed at providing a thorough and nuanced account of the occurrences in the field, as noted by Bogdan (1992).

The case study approach follows five systematic scientific steps that guide the research process. The first step involves preparing research instruments, typically through the development of a measurement indicator matrix that addresses the problem under investigation, such as socio-cultural, socio-economic, and environmental risk indicators. The second step emphasizes the importance of acquiring extensive information about both the research object and subjects. Following this, the third step involves collecting a comprehensive array of data, as the richness of this data reflects the depth of the research conducted. The fourth step requires holistic data analysis, wherein the researcher must sort and select relevant data for inclusion. Finally, the fifth step involves drawing well-founded conclusions based on the analyzed data, as highlighted by Robert (2014), ensuring that the findings contribute meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge.

3.3 Type of research

This research adopts a qualitative methodology with a critical approach, recognizing the importance of theory as a fundamental tool for analysis. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative researchers employ theoretical frameworks to delve deeper into the issues being studied, enabling a multifaceted understanding of complex social phenomena. In the first instance, akin to quantitative research, qualitative methods serve as a broad explanatory mechanism for behaviors and attitudes, often incorporating various variables, constructs, and hypotheses. For instance, ethnographers might focus on themes related to culture, such as social control, language, stability and change, or social organization, which includes kinship and family dynamics. These themes effectively provide a pre-existing set of hypotheses derived from the literature, even if they are not formally labeled as theories, guiding anthropologists in their exploration of diverse cultural behaviors and attitudes.

Moreover, the integration of theoretical lenses in qualitative research has become increasingly prevalent, offering a comprehensive framework for investigating issues such as gender, class, and race, particularly concerning marginalized groups. This theoretical lens acts as a transformative perspective, significantly influencing the nature of the questions posed, as well as informing the methods of data collection and analysis. The emergence of this approach in the 1980s marked a pivotal shift in qualitative research, broadening its scope and enriching its analytical depth. It guides researchers in identifying critical issues to study, such as marginalization, empowerment, oppression, and power dynamics, while also emphasizing the importance of focusing on specific populations, including women, low-income groups, and various ethnic and racial communities.

Finally, the theoretical lens employed in qualitative research also shapes how researchers position themselves within their studies. It highlights the significance of acknowledging personal, cultural, and historical contexts that may introduce bias into the research process. Consequently, the final written reports must be crafted thoughtfully to avoid further marginalizing the individuals involved in the research. Collaborating with participants becomes essential, as it allows researchers to formulate actionable recommendations aimed at improving the lives and communities of those studied. This commitment to ethical research practices is crucial, ensuring that qualitative inquiry not only seeks to understand but also aims to enact positive change within society, as noted by Creswell (2014).

3.4 Data collection techniques

Data for this research were collected using a combination of techniques, including observation, interviews, and documentation studies, as outlined by Maxwell (2013). The observation process targeted the leaders and administrators of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) in Bekasi City, who were selected based on specific criteria. These criteria included their experience as party administrators and their familiarity with the religious conflicts that have arisen in Bekasi City. Through direct observation, the researcher aimed to gain insights into the leaders' behaviors, decision-making processes, and their responses to the community's challenges. This observational data served as a foundational aspect of the research, providing context and depth to the understanding of the organizational dynamics within MUI.

In addition to observation, in-depth interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data that aligned with the research theme. These interviews allowed for a more nuanced exploration of individual perspectives and experiences regarding the religious conflicts in Bekasi City. The documentation study was also a critical component of the data collection process, as it involved reviewing historical records and relevant documents that shed light on past events. Analyzing these documents provided essential background information and

helped triangulate the data obtained from observations and interviews. Collectively, these data collection techniques enriched the research findings and contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the role and impact of MUI in addressing religious conflicts within the community.

3.5 Data analysis technique

Miles and Huberman explained that qualitative data analysis techniques are carried out with a flow model with three main stages, namely data display, data reduction, and making conclusions (Miles, 1994). Data display is a process of selecting data, focusing data, simplifying data, abstracting data, and transcribing data. This step is generally done by tabulating data based on certain classifications. Data reduction involves organising the data to form a compressed collection of information that allows for the drawing of conclusions and further action. As for making conclusions, it contains activities that verify the analysis process, contradict arguments and elaborate on the findings of other researchers so that they can be used as validity analysis (Sugiyono, 2013).

The flow model of this research can be divided into several key stages, beginning with data identification, classification, and categorization. Initially, the researcher aims to collect extensive and in-depth information from a variety of sources, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the topic. This data collection involves in-depth interviews and documentation of relevant information from the research object. Once the data is gathered, classification takes place to group the information based on similarities and differences, as well as its usefulness. This classification is crucial as it helps identify important elements, supporting factors, and any data that may be deemed unnecessary. Furthermore, comparing the collected data allows the researcher to obtain a more nuanced view of the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the information.

Following data classification, the researcher proceeds to describe the arranged data, analyzing and interpreting it to derive meaningful insights. After conducting this analysis, a validation check is performed to ensure the reliability of the data, which is a critical step in maintaining research integrity. The culmination of these activities leads to the drawing of conclusions, a stage that is often the most challenging in qualitative research, particularly within a case study approach. Unlike quantitative studies, where conclusions can be drawn from statistical analyses, qualitative studies require researchers to rely on their judgment and the context of the findings. As a result, researchers must carefully formulate their conclusions based on the evidence collected and their understanding of the research subject, striving to provide a coherent and valuable interpretation of the data.

4. Results and Discussion

The qualitative research revealed several significant findings regarding the role of MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) as both a religious and social organization. Firstly, it was observed that MUI has not been fully effective in reconciling community divisions, indicating a gap in its outreach and mediation efforts. Additionally, the inter-faith meeting forums that are intended to promote dialogue and understanding have not been consistently implemented, often occurring only in response to conflicts rather than as a proactive measure. This inconsistency hinders the potential for building long-term relationships among different religious groups. Lastly, the ongoing contestation surrounding religious symbols continues to fuel resistance among community groups towards other faiths, highlighting the need for MUI to take a more active role in addressing these tensions and fostering a more harmonious coexistence among diverse religious communities.

Although not in direct contact with other religious groups, MUI can be actively involved based on its function in providing religious services to Muslims. This role will provide education especially in terms of Islamic character to avoid disputes and divisions of the ummah. In line with that, the role of MUI Bekasi City will encourage the improvement of

Ta'awun, Rahmat, Ummah principles. The principle of ta'awun will have an impact on a good social construction in which every individual who is part of a community group will help each other. Ta'awun is a way to build social piety that can be instilled in every individual from an early age (Teguh, 2022). This concept in the Western view is known as 'philanthropy' which aims to build togetherness between people. In the field of Islamic da'wah, philanthropy is emphasised in a number of verses about almsgiving to realise two things, namely: strengthening ideology, and strengthening togetherness or social piety (Al-Mubarok, 2020).

In Bekasi City, MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) is actively engaged in philanthropic activities aimed at supporting various target communities. One of the primary initiatives involves providing assistance to da'i (preachers) working across 12 sub-districts. This support includes financial aid for living expenses and the provision of basic necessities, allowing these religious leaders to focus on their roles within the community. KH Mi'ran Syamsuri, the Chairman of MUI Bekasi City, emphasized that these philanthropic efforts aim to strengthen community bonds through regular assistance. By doing so, MUI hopes to ensure the resilience of the ummah, both ideologically and socially, as da'i play a crucial role in guiding and supporting the community on a daily basis.

Another important aspect of MUI's philanthropic activities is its outreach to mu'alaf (new converts to Islam). In addition to offering material support, MUI provides mentoring to fulfill the Islamic education needs of these individuals. On December 9-10, 2023, MUI conducted training sessions for both da'i and mu'alaf, which are part of its routine activities designed for these target groups. This training is essential for channeling the ideals of strengthening Islamic faith within the community effectively. By focusing on the educational aspect, MUI aims to ensure that new converts have a solid foundation in their faith.

Epen Supendi, the head of the training committee from the Special Institution of MUI Bekasi City, stated that these activities are a response to the challenges posed by the globalization of information technology. The training for da'i is intended to enhance their capabilities and ensure they are well-equipped to address community issues. For the mu'alaf, the training serves as a means to help them maintain consistency in their faith and practice. MUI also extends special social assistance to mu'alaf, reinforcing their commitment to support new converts in their spiritual journey. Through these initiatives, MUI strives to foster a more cohesive and resilient Muslim community in Bekasi City.

The principle of mercy is central to the Prophethood of Muhammad SAW, who was sent to the world as a blessing for all of creation. This principle serves as a guiding force for Muslims, urging them to embody mercy not only towards fellow human beings but also towards the environment. It emphasizes the responsibility of every Muslim to contribute positively to society by fostering unity and compassion within the ummah. By upholding this principle, Muslims are encouraged to actively engage in acts of kindness, understanding, and support for those around them. This commitment to mercy is foundational in building a harmonious community where everyone's rights and dignity are respected.

In this context, MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) plays a significant role in addressing social issues within the community. By collaborating with local leaders, MUI actively provides input and solutions to the challenges faced by the people, even when not acting as the primary actor in these situations. Zulkarnai Alfisyahrin, the Secretary of MUI Bekasi City, highlighted that MUI is always responsive to social problems, stepping in at the request of regional heads or other stakeholders. This proactive approach demonstrates MUI's commitment to its duties and functions, ensuring that it remains a relevant and supportive presence in times of need. Through these actions, MUI reinforces its mission to be a guiding force for positive change in society.

The principle of ummah emphasizes the importance of maintaining unity and integrity among Muslims. This unity is not merely a social construct; it serves a greater purpose of creating ongoing benefits for all of humanity. MUI recognizes that fostering unity involves addressing various issues, such as the establishment of houses of worship and the right to

worship freely. These issues are essential for nurturing a peaceful coexistence among diverse religious groups within the community. Ultimately, by focusing on the collective welfare of the ummah, MUI aims to promote a society that thrives on mutual respect, cooperation, and shared values.

Research observations indicate that the new ummah principle is particularly effective for seasonal communities, emphasizing the importance of strengthening religious education to enhance the capacity of the ummah in addressing various circumstances. In Bekasi City, the Research and Study Division of MUI has been actively implementing this approach through routine activities held every Saturday during the 2022/2023 period. According to Wildan Hasan, the Chairman of the Research and Development Division, these study themes are designed to tackle current community issues collectively. By focusing on the real challenges faced by society, the MUI aims to foster a more responsive and educated community. This proactive stance is vital in ensuring that the principles of the ummah are not just theoretical but are translated into practical solutions for the community.

However, despite these efforts to strengthen religious education, there remains a significant gap in reaching the general public effectively. The reaction to socio-religious conflicts has, paradoxically, intensified, highlighting the complexities surrounding MUI's role in such situations. Past incidents, such as the demonstrations against the establishment of churches in 2010 and 2017, reveal a more contentious side to MUI's engagement. These protests were notably organized by leaders and administrators of MUI Bekasi City, reflecting a divergence from their educational mission. While MUI did not officially endorse these demonstrations, the involvement of its leaders conveyed a tacit alignment with the views of specific community factions opposed to the churches.

This alignment raises important questions about the impact of MUI's actions on communal harmony and religious tolerance. By siding with particular groups, MUI risks alienating segments of the population who advocate for interfaith dialogue and coexistence. The strong opposition to the HKBP Church in East Bekasi and the Santa Clara Church in North Bekasi illustrates the potential for escalation in socio-religious tensions. To effectively embody the new ummah principle, MUI must find a balance between addressing the concerns of its constituents and fostering an inclusive environment. Ultimately, a commitment to education and dialogue is essential for mitigating conflict and building a more unified community in the face of diversity.

5. Conclusions

The polarisation of power between religious groups shows that there is disagreement (iktilãf) among people. The impact of conflict is very strong and deep-rooted because it represents values that are believed to be true by each party to the conflict. This value is in a moral perspective that is believed, so it is difficult to eliminate. The phenomenon of iktilãf gives birth to iftirãq or division at the lower level as a reaction to an unequal social order. In communication studies, when the escalation of conflict increases, the masses tend to be stronger and organisational leaders weaker (Faisal, 2000). The occurrence of iktilãf and iftirãq will never give birth to the optimism of a benefit-orientated ummah, but rather mafsadah that can undermine the goals of the ummah. The effort to keep people away from disputes has actually been attempted by MUI Bekasi City by strengthening inward, through capacity building of da'i who are assigned in every sub-district in Bekasi City. However, the effort has not yet touched the 'outward' of the wider Islamic community, where Islamic leaders who are active in MUI activities are also involved in religious conflicts.

The implications of disputes between religious groups result in development disorientation in Bekasi City. The relationship between communities will be degraded because the people are in two open horizontal conflicts, the supporting power of fellow citizens decreases and tends to eliminate each other. MUI Bekasi City as a religious organisation will be difficult to move in community development activities. The programs

initiated, such as interfaith dialogue, received high resistance because they were considered to have high partisanship. This happens because a number of figures who are affiliated with MUI Bekasi City are also involved in religious conflicts involved in religious conflicts. Reconciliation between religious leaders is a conflict resolution in reducing social turmoil that can spread. Each religious figure is given space and access to dialogue with their people freely, given space and place facilities for dialogue activities until the people understand the purpose of the dialogue. Optimising the role of all elements of society led by MUI aims to reduce the polarisation of the people. This community participation is important in fostering trust in MUI and all development stakeholders in Bekasi City.

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