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Psychology of communication approach in islamic studies

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ABSTRACT

Background: This article aims to explore fear appeal and anxiety in attitude change based on the perspective of Islamic Studies with a psychology of Religion and communication approach. The psychological approach in Islamic studies is one of the approaches widely used to identify human behavior. **Methods**: This research is a qualitative study with a library research method based on reference searches sourced from several books and journals that can be accessed online through Scopus which are analyzed using bibliometric analysis with VOSviewer. **Results**: The results of the analysis found that fear appeal and anxiety influence in attitude change can be understood through Islamic Studies.

KEYWORDS: anxiety and attitude change; communication psychology; fear appeals; islamic studies; qur'an.

1. Introduction

The psychology of religion is a branch of psychology that studies how religious beliefs, practices, and experiences affect an individual's behavior, emotions, and thoughts. It includes research on various aspects of religion, such as beliefs, rituals, spirituality, and the influence of religion in everyday life. The psychology of religion seeks to understand how religious factors affect psychological well-being and human behavior and how these psychological aspects can contribute to a deeper understanding of religion and spirituality.

According to Peter Connoly, there is a difference between the psychology of religion and religious psychology. Psychology of religion refers to the application of psychological methods and data to the study of religious beliefs, experiences and attitudes, while religious psychology refers to the use of psychological methods and data by religious people for the purpose of enriching and/or defending religious beliefs, experiences and behaviors. The psychology of religion is a controversial field that deals with the truth or falsehood of religious beliefs, and offers an arena in which radically different discussions of religious phenomena can be presented.

Psychology of religion in the context of a communication process approach is interesting and important to be studied further. How the components of communication play a role in improving aspects of cognition, affection and conation for attitude change in religious life is important to discuss in Islamic studies.

Islamic studies reached a peak in ancient times, which helped the development of science in subsequent ages. This was due to several reasons, one of which was Islam's internal (Hill, 1991) encouragement to pursue knowledge with no time limit. Some important revelations (nash) regarding science have become Islam's support and

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response to science and civilization which made the scientific tradition so fertile and vibrant in subsequent times (Nasution, 1985) including the approach of religious psychology. Psychology of religion in the context of a communication process approach is interesting and important to be studied further. How the components of communication play a role in increasing aspects of cognition, affection and conation for attitude change in religious life is important to discuss in Islamic studies. The case of forest and land fires became interesting to study after the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) issued a ban on deforestation and burning of forests and land. This is also commanded by Allah in the Qur'an: "Eat and drink from the sustenance of Allah and do not roam the earth making mischief" (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 60).

"And do not make corruption in the earth, after (Allah) has made it right, and pray to Him with fear and hope. Verily, the mercy of Allah is very near to those who do good" (Q.S. al-A'râf: 56).

The history of forest and land fires in Indonesia has decreased significantly when viewed from the severe fires that occurred in 2015 covering more than 2.6 million hectares and in 2019 covering more than 1.6 million hectares and in 2021 only approximately 350,000 hectares as described in Figure 1.

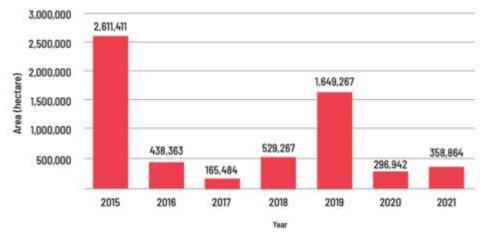


Fig 1. Forest and land fires from 2015-2021

When forest and land fires occur, the resulting emissions also increase, so prevention needs to be done to reduce high Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG).

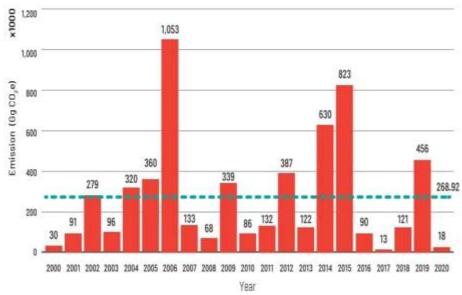


Fig 2. Emissions from forest and land fires from 2015-2020

2. Methods

This article is a qualitative research with the characteristics of the data in the form of concepts and descriptive (Afrizal, 2019) descriptions based on a literature review that examines the psychology of religion, especially in Islamic studies. Data searches were conducted through the Scopus database and 230 articles were found using the keywords Psychology, Religion, and Islam.

Then these articles were analyzed using VOSviewer to see the position of the articles in the period 2010 - 2023 as shown in Figure 3.

Then the literature search focused on topics that discuss Communication psychology, Islamic studies, fear appeal, anxiety, forest fires, and attitude change. In this paper, the author limited the search to forest fires, burning culture and communication and found 129 Scopus indexed articles.

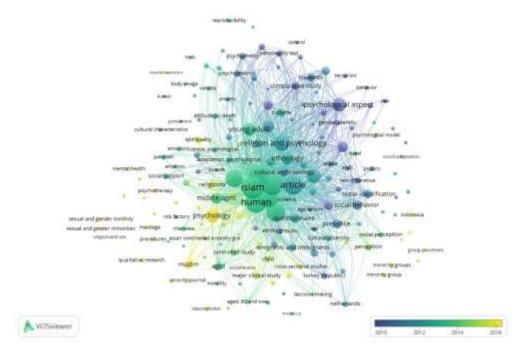


Fig 3. Search results through VOSviewer to see the research position

3. Results and Discussion

In 2015 Indonesia experienced a huge forest and land fire of around 2.6 million hectares or four and a half times the size of the island of Bali. The fires were caused by man-made fires, about more than 100,000 of which were used for agricultural land preparation due to their low cost. In 2015, fires in Indonesia were estimated to cost USD 16.1 billion or IDR 221 trillion (Glauber, et al., 2016). The causes of fires in Indonesia and other tropical countries are mainly anthropogenic. The cause of fires is either accidental or intentional. How to properly manage fire prevention remains unclear, including finding key components to identify fire sources and safe land use (Cattau, et al., 2016).

Vegetation fires around Palembang during the long dry season have been recorded for more than a hundred years, but drought and irresponsible land use have caused many vegetation fire problems in the last 20 years (Marie & Philippe, 1999). The community's habit of clearing land by burning is also one of the triggers for widespread peat fires (Yasir, et al., 2021). Research shows that 69% of people clear land by slashing bushes and then burning them (Arifudin, et al., 2019).

Referring to the results of research showing that forest and land burning is mostly done by humans, the role of Islamic studies becomes relevant and important. This consideration is also the basis for MUI to issue fatwa no. 30/2016 on the prohibition of deforestation and forest and land burning issued on July 27, 2016.

3.1 Communication factors in the Quran

The Qur'an, as the holy book of Islam, contains many verses that contain messages about communication. Here are some of the elements communication that can be found in the Qur'an:

- a. The Qur'an describes how God sends messages to people through His prophets and messengers. Prophets like Prophet Muhammad were sent to convey God's revelation to mankind
- b. The Qur'ān contains verses that demonstrate the power of words in influencing people's thoughts, feelings and actions. Words in the Qur'ān are often used to advise, motivate or remind humanity.
- c. The Qur'an encourages Muslims to communicate in a kind and honest manner. This is reflected in teachings about the importance of speaking the truth, avoiding slander, and interacting with others in a kind and fair manner.
- d. The Qur'an also emphasizes the importance of good listening. Verses in the Qur'ān suggest that people listen attentively and consciously to the message being conveyed, both in the context of everyday conversation and in the context of listening to God's revelation.
- e. The Qur'ān provides guidelines for Muslims in conveying religious messages to others. Prophets in the Qur'an such as Prophet Abraham, Prophet Moses, and Prophet Muhammad often used various persuasion and proselytization strategies to influence the thoughts and actions of others.
- f. The Qur'an also provides guidance on how to resolve conflicts peacefully through effective communication and wise decision-making.

How the communication process occurs in the delivery of God's revelation can be explained in the interaction of various communication components that explain how the messages of revelation are conveyed as shown in Figure 4.

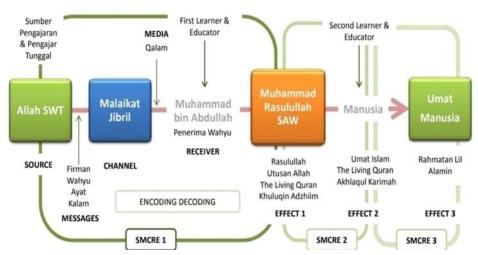


Fig 4. The communication process in delivering God's messages in the form of revelation

3.2 Threat messages in the Qur'an

One of the communication patterns in the Qur'an is in the form of threats by taking certain patterns including using the word anzara which means to warn or convey threats. Surah At-Taubah (9) verse 68

Allah has threatened the male and female hypocrites and the disbelievers with Hellfire. They will abide therein. Enough is for them. Allah curses them. For them is an everlasting torment.

Meaning:

Verily, We have warned you of a near punishment on the Day (when) man will see what his hands have done and the disbeliever will say, "Oh, if only I were earth."

Meaning:

When Our clear verses are recited before them, you will see (signs of) disbelief on the faces of those who disbelieve. They almost attack those who recite Our verses to them. Say (Prophet Muhammad), "Shall I tell you (something) worse than that?" (That is) the hell which Allah has threatened to those who disbelieve. That is the worst place of return.

Surah Al-Mu'minum (23) verse 95

Meaning:

Indeed, We have the power to show you (Prophet Muhammad) what We threatened them with.

Surah Yasin (36) verse 63

Meaning:

This is the Jahanam of which you were warned.

Surah Shad (38) verse 53

Meaning:

This is what is promised to you on the Day of Judgment.

Surah Al-Ahqaf (46) verse 21 وَاذْكُرْ اَخَا عَادًّا ِذْ اَنْذَرَ قَوْمَهُ بِالْأَحْقَافِ وَقَدْ خَلَتِ النُّذُرُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهٖ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوٓ ا إِلَّا اللهَ ۞ إِنِّيۡ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ۚ

Meaning:

Remember the brother of 'Ad (Hud) when he warned his people (who lived) in (the valley of) Ahqaf.691) Indeed, warners had passed before and after him. (He said,) "Do not worship other than Allah. Indeed, I fear that you will be afflicted on a great day."

Surah Fussilat (41) verse 13

Meaning:

If they turn away, say, "I have warned you of (a punishment in the form of) lightning like the lightning that fell on (the people of) 'Ad and (the people of) Samud."

Surah Al-Lail (92) verse 14

فَانْذَرْ تُكُمْ نَارًا تَلَظَّىٰ

Meaning:

I warn you of a blazing hell.

Meaning:

Verily, We have warned you of a near punishment on the Day (when) man will see what his hands have done and the disbeliever will say, "Oh, if only I were earth."

Meaning:

Before it (the Qur'an) was the Book of Moses as an imam and a mercy. This (Qur'ān) is a Book that confirms (the previous Books) in Arabic to warn the wrongdoers and give glad tidings to the believers.

Meaning:

Warn the people of the day (when) the punishment will come upon them. So, (then) the wrongdoers will say, "O our Lord, postpone (the punishment) for us (and return us to the world) even for a little while, surely we will obey Your call and will follow the messengers". (To them it is said,) "Did you not swear in the world that you would never switch (from the life of this world to the Hereafter)?

3.3 Communication psychology in message processing theory

There has been much research on public participation in environmental communication actions. Communication designed with relevant themes and linked to psychological and sociological approaches is an effective approach in changing attitudes (Kumpu, 2022). Public participation in climate change policy making is needed by considering aspects of psychosocial and attitudinal adaptation. The lack of public understanding of how to participate in climate change adaptation remains a challenge, including understanding the influence of risk, vulnerability and capacity in responding to forest and land fires including the impacts of climate change (Hugel & Davies, 2020).

The Yale Tradition's theory of persuasion message processing finds communication variables such as communication situation and general persuasibility play a role in the attitude change process. This analysis can explain that some audiences are easy to persuade and others are difficult to persuade, regardless of the topic and situation. The processing of persuasion messages depends on five elements: attention, comprehension, acceptance, retention, and action (Larson, 2010).

This theory provides a more comprehensive understanding of how persuasive messages are processed and influenced by communication factors. Communication situations such as social context, message characteristics, and the relationship between communicators and message recipients play an important role in influencing the

processing of persuasion messages. Individual persuasibility characteristics such as the tendency to accept and be influenced by persuasive messages are also influential in the attitude change process. This communication interaction will involve designing messages that use emotional appeal, reward appeal, motivational appeal and fear appeal techniques (Albarracin, 2002).

Various studies related to fear appeals have been conducted. Research examining the impact of different levels of fear appeals on climate change has been linked to individuals' intentions to engage in pro-environmental attitudes, and how fear appeals influence individuals to engage in pro-environmental attitudes has been found to vary. The results showed that respondents who read texts with low fear appeals would evoke more fear emotions and have greater intentions to engage in pro-environmental attitudes compared to respondents who read texts with high fear appeals (Chen, 2014).

An individual's moral responsibility plays an important role in determining his or her intention to engage in pro-environmental behavior, both for low fear appeals and high fear appeals conditions. Messages that use high fear appeals and are reinforced by the presence of collective references will determine the intention to engage. The results of this study contribute to validating the influence of group reference associated with fear appeals applied to people's pro-environmental attitudes in the Chinese socio-cultural context of responding to the issue of global warming (Chen, 2016).

Fear appeals research focuses on hope as a key driver in motivating attitudes and attitude change. This research concludes that fear appeals will be effective if they are designed to evoke hope (Nabi, et al., 2019). Research that uses fear appeals to generate hope is also conducted by political parties in campaigning in four countries in Europe (Widmann, et al., 2022).

Many factors influence the effectiveness of fear appeals in persuasive environmental communication situations. Much of this communication research is conducted by testing the conditions under which message appeals reinforced with fear appeals can influence beliefs, intentions and attitudes (Tannenbaum, et al., 2015). After designing the message, the message appeal will be selected. The message appeals selected are appeals that use fear appeals. Messages designed using fear appeals try to create fear in order to act according to what the message designer suggests. Many factors influence fear appeals in persuasion situations. Fear appeals are effective when the suggested attitude must be done immediately and how the effort to achieve the attitude is clearly described.

The Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM) theory is one of the most frequently used theories in fear appeals research. This model explains how messages that use fear appeals will or will not be effective in influencing attitudes and behaviors (Littlejohn, et al., 2016). This EPPM theory can help explain that the same message will have a different impact for two different recipients of the message. This difference is the basis for communicators to design effective persuasion messages.

Fear appeals seem to be effective in changing attitudes when:

- 1. Immediate action is acceptable to the audience for the problem suggested
- 2. Specific instructions are given to carry out the advice (Leventhal, et al., 1965).

3.4 Aspects of anxiety in attitude change

Audiences in receiving messages are influenced by various factors including persuasiveness, knowledge, initial attitudes, self-esteem, personality and anxiety (Hovland, et al., 2021). Researchers suspect that anxiety factors can facilitate the communication process or even act as a barrier in certain situations. The anxiety aspect consists of two elements, namely Neurotic characterological (trait anxiety) and Situational (state anxiety).

Anxiety is basically closely related to the emotional state in an attempt to overcome the threatening danger. Trait anxiety has a relatively persistent tendency to live with anxiety and state anxiety is a momentary state when a person is living with anxiety.

Anxiety plays an important role in the processing of persuasion messages because it can affect the audience's response to the message.

An individual's level of anxiety can affect attention, information processing and message evaluation. Individuals who have high levels of trait anxiety tend to be more prone to anxiety experiences and may process persuasive messages with more caution or skepticism. Situational aspects of anxiety can arise in certain contexts, such as when facing environmental threats or anxiety-provoking situations. Communication requires an understanding of the role of anxiety, both trait and state, which allows researchers to design messages that match the emotional state of the audience (Li, et al., 2013).

This anxiety factor needs to be considered so that communication strategies can be more effective in overcoming emotional barriers and influencing attitudes and behaviors related to climate change. Anxiety can affect the way audiences process persuasive messages. Individuals with high levels of anxiety, be it trait anxiety or state anxiety, tend to be more sensitive to messages that evoke fear or threat.

They will process the message carefully, consider the risks and consequences involved and seek additional information before making a decision or changing their attitude (Spielberger, et al., 2017). Anxiety can also affect the audience's attention and focus on the message. Individuals who tend to experience anxiety may be more focused on threats or problems that can trigger anxiety such as trait anxiety (Lemal, et al., 2009). So that persuasive messages delivered need to address these anxieties sensitively and provide solutions that allow audiences to feel safer and more protected.

By considering the anxiety factor, researchers can develop effective communication strategies to reduce anxiety, increase understanding, and change attitudes and behaviors related to climate change. According to the researcher, the anxiety factor is a key factor in message reception, therefore the researcher agrees with Spielberger who attributes anxiety as an influential factor by using fear appeals.

4. Conclusions

Effective communication can raise public awareness and educate on forest and land fire prevention practices and mobilize support to engage all stakeholders. An integrated blend of Islamic studies and psychology of religion approached with psychology of communication is helpful to improve the effectiveness of communication outcomes. This approach will be maximized when referring to quantitative and qualitative data based on the three main risk components of hazard management, information exposure and vulnerability followed by a structured participatory approach involving an Islamic studies approach.

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All authors fully contributed to the writing of this article

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