Information-seeking Behavior of College Students on Religious Tolerance through Social Media

Tingkah Laku Pencarian Maklumat tentang Toleransi Agama melalui Media Sosial

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ABSTRACT

Information seeking behavior is all information related activity. This activity occurs when there is a need for information to increase knowledge. The existence of social media provides a way for people to find information quickly. The openness of social media is why many people use it. Students have become one of the biggest group of people on social media. Besides studying, students in Indonesia have an important role in the social circumstance, one of which is regarding the religious tolerance. Students may serve as facilitators of religious harmony in Indonesia. However, they must firstly have enough knowledge to find information on religious tolerance, and thus social media can be a major source of information. The objectives of this research are to discover the levels of Indonesian university student's information seeking behavior on religious tolerance through social media, knowing the obstacles in seeking the information and knowing the students' responses after receiving the information through social media. This research employs a combination model of Behavioral models of seeking strategies, developed by David Ellis and T.D Wilson and a qualitative method by conducting a focus group discussion to six group of students in Jakarta, Indonesia from the various religion, namely Islam, Catholic, Protestantism, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucianisme. Universities participated in this study are Universiti Mercu Buana Jakarta, Universiti Bina Nusantara, Universiti Negeri Jakarta dan Sekolah Tinggi Akuntansi Negara. Based on the two models employed, this study found that in general all the informants use social media in order to find an information and basically already have their own reference in searching for information regarding their religion. Furthermore, every individual has a different behavior when they are looking for an information. The main obstacles when seeking the information is hoax about the religious tolerance and the weak internet connection.

Keywords: Information seeking behavior; Social media; Students; Religious tolerance

ABSTRAK


Kata kunci: Tingkah laku pencarian maklumat; Mahasiswa; Media sosial; Toleransi agama
INTRODUCTION

Information is the main source of development of various human knowledge and activities. Most of all people in their activity need information and it cannot be denied. This is because information has become one essential thing for human life. Information can help people increase their ability and experience to solve any life problem. Further, information also helps people to build work procedures as well as make them work fast, thoroughly and capably. According to Pawit Muhammad Yusup et al. (2017), without information, human cannot play more in their surroundings. Thus, people are willing to sacrifice their time, effort and money to obtain information they need.

In attempting to understand the information terms, some experts propose a definition of information. Among others, one suggested by Rivai (2011) stating that information is a stimulus to realize uncertainty which makes an individual aware of their needs and create a change in certain stages. On the contrary, Andrew M Kaniki (2003) defines information as an idea, fact, rich of imaginative thought, data having potential in decision making, problem-solving as well as answer for questions which might decrease the uncertainty. Human needs for information lead them to find the information needed. The search makes the information-seeking carried out. According to T. D Wilson (2006), information-seeking behavior is a deliberate search because of the need to meet the objectives. Every person has different reasons why they search information depends on the knowledge he needs such as the view of Borlund (2013) The need and behavior of information seeking can be influenced by various kinds of causes as well as social, cultural, educational background, goals that exist in human beings themselves and social environment.

In this modern era, information seeking is facilitated by the rapid growth of communication and information technology. The use of communication and information technology may be the right choice for everyone to use as a medium to find information and carry out communication with others. More advanced communication and information technology makes it easier for humans to find information faster and easier. This is because it is helped by the presence of the internet which is currently a part of community activity in various circles. In addition to getting information, the internet also makes it easier for humans to share ideas, thoughts and even issues that may attract the attention of many people.

The results of a survey by Indonesian Internet Services Association APJII (2017) that out of 262 million Indonesian citizens, the growth of internet users in Indonesia reached 143.26 million people or 54.68% of the total number of citizens. Furthermore, 85.35% of the internet is used to chat, while 87.13% is used for social media. This number proves that the growth of Internet use, typically social media, is very fast in Indonesia. Social media is used as a means to find information quickly and easily. It just needs a very short time to obtain the information that we want. According to Yogrt in Yoseph Edwin (2106), a social application made by KONGKO startup company showed that 79% of social media was used as a source of information reference by internet users.

Indonesian college students are a part of the digital society and become a community that often uses the Internet to find information. Various information is sought to fulfill their needs, especially those related to learning tasks. Students have the responsibility to study in accordance with the desired field of science. Student knowledge must continue to grow and create updates for advancement and success in science. In addition to learning, students have an obligation to control social and humanitarian issues or (social control) for the country so that if there are rules or cases that do not provide justice for the community, students will participate in the fight for rights of people who experience injustice.

Further efforts are made to train student leadership and responsibility. The Indonesian government gives you the freedom to join a student association club or Student Activities Unit as a place for students to think and discuss Indonesian issues. One of the clubs most frequently attended by students is the Spiritual Student Activities Unit (SME) or religious student club in Indonesia which is a student association club with the aim of providing students with a religious understanding based on their religious beliefs. The club is located at every University in Indonesia and consists of Islamic Student Activities (Islamic) Unit, Christian Student Union (Protestant), Christian Student (Catholic) Family, Hindu Student Family, Buddhist Student Family, and Congoese Student Family. Regularly, clubs engage in religious activities for students to provide clarity on true religious teachings including religious tolerance.
Students participating in student clubs or organizations must always keep being up to date with current information or newspapers in Indonesia and abroad as they are considered excellent people in thinking and acting with the knowledge they possess. One of the concerned issues may include religious tolerance in Indonesia that is common on social media. Being a student should serve as a connecting medium for the community in communicating good religious understanding, how to tolerate religion and create harmony from the differences.

Bahari (2018) states that higher education will influence the outlook, insight and critical thinking that is within students’ thinking about the future of society and the nation. Thus, the students will emerge leaders who will play a role in enhancing the unity of the human race in the harmony of religion. In understanding religious differences, if we do not know and understand correctly then we will not have tolerance because we feel that we are the only owner of the truth. According to Zulyadain’s (2018), knowledge of religious tolerance in understanding other religions is very important to teach in establishing inter-religious harmony.

**RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Information seeking behavior is closely related to information needs, a person who needs information will think what he needs, remember what he needs and make a decision according to what he needs, this is in line with the view of Pendit (2003) stating that information-seeking behavior is the whole model of human being behavior related to information. This is all about human behavior in which they require, think, treat, search and utilize information from various channels, sources, and media.

The search for information is crucial to gaining and enhancing the knowledge needed including for students to develop religious tolerance. Religious unity cannot be realized if students do not know the information about religious tolerance because, in religious tolerance, students must know the development and understanding of religious teaching in Indonesia especially the teachings of every religion recognized by the Indonesian government.

Then, the issue of religious tolerance that can be considered is a report of Setara Institute (2018) stating that in 2017, there were 155 cases of violations of religious tolerance in 29 Indonesian territories. Some examples of such violations are contempt of Islamic law, the expulsion of worshipers and the prohibition of religious activities. Meanwhile, during 2018, Setara Institute also reported that there had been 109 violations of religious tolerance. Most of these cases occurred in urban areas. In addition, Setara Institute also reported that the majority of the perpetrators of all these cases were youths.

Statements on religious conflict and religious tolerance are actually interesting to discuss because they are one of the important issues to be paid attention to, especially by students as one of the social life controllers in Indonesia. Students can serve as an example for the community to create religious tolerance and harmony in Indonesia. But before this can happen, students need a correct knowledge of religious tolerance and must have a clear understanding of the religious teachings they believe in. Hence, students need to get a lot of information and references from various sources.

Every student must fully understand religious tolerance with a reliable source of reference because failing to understand may result in a detrimental effect and even develop a disrespectful attitude toward other religions. According to Azra (2015) in his research on religious tolerance in Indonesia, the attitude of intolerance to other religions is due to the understanding or knowledge of religions that very strictly holds exclusivism which means that they do not acknowledge and do not want any other religions or groups to exist. This statement is in line with the findings of Sofyan and Sabardila (2011) in their research on students’ perceptions of religious tolerance in Central Java. The results of this research showed that out of the six students who came to the focus group discussion, two of them still thought that tolerance was teaching tat can ruin Islam.

However, there are currently many social media platforms that students can use to find information. Each platform has its own advantages and disadvantages depending on the factors involved in social media and platform differences also bring about different ways of looking for information as each platform will reflect different characters and behaviors of each user, this is in line with one research conducted by Park and Lee (2017) about the character of social media users. The research was conducted on 100 thousand users of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The results of this research show that each of the different social media networks depicts different characters and behaviors of each user. Therefore, behavioral differences in the use of social media are quite interesting to be investigated and discussed in this study, especially to examine...
the students’ seeking information behavior about religious tolerance through social media.

The aforementioned statement shows the need for information from students to know their religious tolerance and development in Indonesia. Further, due to the need for such information, comes the information-seeking behavior. Behavior is demonstrated by using social media as one of the most reliable sources of information. However, since social media has the characteristics of participation and openness, Power (2014) states that anyone can use social media, the nature of it is that the content on social media is not all authentic and this can be a hindrance for students to find information.

Based on the above statement, this study will examine the students’ seeking information behavior about religious tolerance through social media. This study was also aimed to find out obstacles that students face when seeking information through social media. This study is important because it seeks to find out how students can access information through social media as a source of reference. In addition, this study will be conducted with a focus group discussion for students who attend the Spiritual Student Activities Unit or student association clubs of various religions.

SEEKING INFORMATION BEHAVIOR MODEL OF DAVID ELLIS AND T.D WILSON

The most popular model among researchers on information behavior is one developed by David Ellis (1987). He developed a model of information-seeking behavior that is directly linked to system information retrieval. Ellis conducted research among scholars who carried out daily activities by searching for readings, researching in field or laboratory studies, writing papers and more. The investigation resulted a theory that describes information-seeking behavior in general as a series of activities. Ellis proposes several stages of information-seeking behavior: Starting activities that lead to information seeking; Half-structured search chaining because it leads to the preferred field; Browsing comprises, travels but is rather directed, in areas where it is considered potential; Differentiating: activity assessing and examining information to be appropriate to the need; Monitoring keeps track of development of information related to search and reading such as on social media; Extracting selectively sources of information identification; Verifying to review the information obtained; Ending of this stage is the final stage of the search for information.

Furthermore, this study also utilized an information-seeking behavior hindrance model popularized by Wilson (1999). These barriers include obstacles from oneself, obstacles from social or social barriers, and barriers from the environment.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative method approach with a case study research type. Qualitative research was conducted through Focus Group Discussion on 6 groups of students from various universities in Special Capital Region of Jakarta namely Mercu Buana University, Archaeological University, State University of Jakarta, and National Accounting High School. Further, each group was classified in different religions including Islam, Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian. Each group consisted of 8 people.

DISCUSSION

One of the findings of this study revealed that many students used social media to find the information they need. Social media that control all the phenomena of democracy in Indonesia. The presence of social media has also changed the character of society especially students in seeking information, one of the changes is that students use social media more often to find information than other media.

For me it’s important to be on social media updates either on campus or off campus especially for fellow students who like to hang out when they don’t have a TV. (a Protestant UNJ)

At the Starting stage generally, informants rarely specified topics when looking for information through social media. The vast majority of informants used social media only to view current news or entertainment and rarely to find information on religious tolerance.

When I am on Instagram, I just randomly open it usually just explore it with the latest information so no need to talk about the topic first, new posts to Instagram are not random at others social media Facebook and others are also random (a Muslim UMB)

Some informants also said that they rarely seek out information on religious tolerance, but if that information is widely discussed and triggered on social media then they will definitely follow and they will search for it even more because they are curious about what is going on.
I rarely find it. I just go with what is triggered, when there is one (religious tolerance) information and I try to find out later (a Buddhist Binus).

At the stage of chaining, some informants said that they did not directly seek references to the experts to find religious tolerance information as the original source, because when using social media, informants could choose which media to refer to and they already had a social media account referenced for their religious information.

The religion of the Confucius is, in fact, an account of the MATAKIN, the high council of Indonesian Confucius. However, it is much discussed about religious tolerance on it, normally, just it just discusses common teachings of Confucius.

Usually, it’s just a catholic Instagram account discussing the Bible (a Chatolic UMB).

His social media account is Dalailama because Dalailama once made a book, we make it a benchmark or a living reference (a Buddhist BINUS).

Next in the Browsing stage, all informants use Instagram and YouTube to find information. They said that the reason they used Instagram was that it’s so easy to use, so exciting and quick to keep up to date. They used YouTube because the information provided was getting more and more various.

…I personally use Instagram more often because it hits now then more users also keep it cool as well as comment pictures. (a Protestant UNJ).

Maybe nowadays many people use two social media, the first one is Instagram and the second one is YouTube because it’s much more interesting and fun because also many friends use Instagram and YouTube which present various information. we can also freely find out the information as we like on it. (a Muslim UMB).

Right now, it looks like Instagram is the closest we have ever been to it, as it should all be because it has a complete feature (a Buddhist BINUS).

At the Browsing stage, in general, all informants from all groups found cases of religious tolerance in Indonesia. Some informants found cases of insults and attacks on his religion on social media.

There was a case of a statue of a Buddha where it was either in Semarang or in Tanjung Balai until it became very viral. The incidents of wildfire everywhere in Tanjung Balai in which found the highest statues of the Buddhist in Indonesia should be taken down. (a Buddhist BINUS).

Yes, of course, the Ahok case went viral on social media for insulting the Qur’anic verse so often that we watch it find out what the true case was (a Protestant UNJ).

At this stage, the informants also obtained information about examples of religious tolerance practices in social media.

I was once informed that there was the largest Roman Catholic Pope, and he kissed the feet of the leader of that country, as a form of tolerance for resolving his conflict even though what was kissed from other religions, now that was a form of tolerance in my opinion. (a Chatolic UMB)

If for example you find a picture about religious tolerance, for example, Muslims and Christians who look different in clothes and hold hands but they tolerate each other, I quite often find this sort. (a Hindu STAN)

At the differentiating stage, information seekers also always chose a lot of accounts as a reference for getting the correct reference. Some informants used a lot of references because they felt the references they were looking for did not meet the needs, unclear, not enough and not appropriate.

I personally prefer Line, because Line can add several official accounts like, for example, Buddhist reborn, then I will also search the KMBD (Buddhist Student Family) to look deeper or improve the information, that’s all. (Buddha)

I also used to search in Gemaku Young Generation Confucian account and or search in the account of the previous MATAKIN Chairperson Uung Sendana to find differences. (a Confucius BINUS)

The next stage is monitoring. This stage is an activity to monitor developments during the issue of religious tolerance on social media. Some informants said that they rarely monitored the development of religious tolerance information. This is because these issues are very sensitive and will usually appear on social media pages automatically if there is an update.

…I rarely find it, but I once searched on Instagram. It will appear later, without looking for it, it appears itself, from there we see, oh there is a problem of tolerance, then from Instagram, we will look for a bit of tolerance, how it is actually happening (a Hindu STAN).

After getting the information needed, several informants did the extracting step, namely the identification activity and made a formula of the information that had been found. Any information selected may be used as a reference for guidelines for living in realizing religious tolerance. As a result of the research of all informants, it can be concluded that at this stage as a whole they would keep and make important notes if the information found was useful for their life, especially for religious tolerance.

…Of course, I will make it as an important record for life because in my principle, what I think is good will be my learning material, if it is such a bad thing, I will not make it for my future reference (a Catholic UMB).

Depending on the information, usually, the information that I keep as a life note life is one that is relevant to my life or information that I will use later in my life for example information about
Further informants from Islam also respected the teachings of other religions. He and her friends were reminded to worship one another. If it is time for a Christian friend’s prayer, he would remind her and on Sunday he would remind his friend to go to church. Meanwhile, an informant of Confucian religion, he said that he would share a lot of information about Confucian religion to everyone. So, they know about the teachings of the Confucian religion. However, Indonesia’s religious community has long been well established. Respect and affection for one another have been exemplified by Indonesian ancestors. But the advent of social media has become a new challenge for the Indonesian people. A small number of people slander on social media, leading to disputes and resentments. The party does not want to see Indonesia reconcile and peaceful and wealth-being.

**CONCLUSION**

Overall, research on the information-seeking behavior on religious tolerance through social media has been carried out based on the popular information search model by David Ellis (1987) and T.D Wilson’s (1999) information seeking barriers model. In addition, this study was also conducted based on the findings of the study objectives. Elements of each model have demonstrated information-seeking behavior on religious tolerance through social media by students of various religions in Indonesia. Whereas, the results showed that the search for information on religious tolerance was rarely performed by every student. They often found information about religious tolerance suddenly on social media pages without they knew and realized it. According to the results of the differences in information seeking behavioral study, all informants had one social media account reference while some informants had many references on social media either from one platform or from multiple platforms. Further, the information-seeking behavior also differed from the information, some informants confirmed the information by looking up the same information through social media, while some informants asked religious experts or sought appropriate references in the teachings of the Bible. But generally, they stored the information they have found and used it for their daily life. The study also found that almost all informants had obstacles to fake news on social media. This issue is an inevitable trial for social media users. The slanderous news has caused much controversy among religions so that peace in Indonesia cannot be established. All
informants hope that the government will find a solution to the problem. Therefore, this study can serve as a reference for all communities to be educated in establishing religious tolerance in Indonesia. Of all the religions that have been recognized in Indonesia, no one of them teaches disputes, hostility or insults other religions. It is found in their teachings to love, respect one another which are one of the most important behaviors in life.

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