



Critical Response of Indonesian Ulema Council Social Media Users Concerning Public Policy Communication during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract. The purpose of this research is to analyze the response of social media users concerning public policy communications from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) in supporting the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. This is explorative qualitative research with a case study approach used to determine the objectives. Data were collected from MUI official social media accounts, such as Facebook and YouTube, through analysis from March 16 to June 10, 2020. A professional linguist was appointed to ensure the findings related to critical public response and maintain the data collected's validity. The main finding of this research revealed that the community's response was very strong, specifically those in the form of rejection. This shows differences in understanding of the fatwa issued by MUI, which led to different perceptions among the Indonesian Muslim community in making decisions concerning worship amid a pandemic. One of the triggering factors is because the communication of MUI public policies in supporting the handling of Covid-19 on social media is not significantly supported by the government. Therefore, this research suggests the importance for MUI to include legal sanctions from the government through the relevant legal apparatus, specifically for Muslims in Indonesia.

Keywords: Social Media, MUI, Public Policy Communication, Covid-19

1 Introduction

Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest Muslim population in the world [1], therefore, the need for the dynamics of social change sometimes requires a fatwa from MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) [2]. Indonesian Muslims are presently faced with numerous changes in the aspects of worship due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic [3]. Hence, it is imperative to implement fatwa guidelines to answer the social and religious changes [4]. This research determines the importance of communication concerning public policies carried out by MUI institution as a reference for the Islamic community in Indonesia related to the issue of *ubudiyah* [5]. It analyzes the strategies used to conduct public policy communication by MUI to support the prevention of the COVID-19 virus that is spreading in most parts of Indonesia.

The use of media and information is considered very effective in disseminating information to the Indonesian Muslim community. That the existence of MUI is very important in terms of producing a fatwa, which is a difficult job with theological risks [6]. This is because its purpose is to carry out God's law for people to guide and practice. The etymological word fatwa is *bayyana* in Arabic, which means to explain [7]. It also means future, which follows the word *tabyin al-Musykil min al-ahkam*, which means a difficult explanation of the law. fatwa is a problem that functions as an answer to a question, both individually and collectively [8].

Preliminary studies carried out that fatwas are also issued based on the results of *ijtihad* of the scholars, in explaining the actions of religious teachings carried out either in the form of a prohibition (Haram) or something recommended [9] [10] [11] [12] [13]. Generally, there is no difference between a fatwa and a decision, moreover, they are both issued by religious institutions. MUI's main task is only associated with appealing, which is an inseparable part of the current government in overcoming the impact of the virus [14]. They are also responsible for disseminating communication messages, most of which are legitimized in the form of fatwas using information technology through social media networks [15]. The government currently uses social media more in communicating message content related to policy issues because it is perceived as a more practical means of responding to changes in community dynamics [16]. Social media acts as an interactive communication platform that enables quick responses to the needs of society, such as the current pandemic [17]. In line with this, MUI as an independent non-governmental organization currently also uses digital communication channels as a public space. That communication technology, specifically social media, has contributed more to community development [18]. This condition leads to openness on something carried out by government agencies and stakeholders

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by opening up great opportunities for citizen participation in public communication policy approaches that can be responded to by the wider community [19]. However, this research only analyzes public responses on social media concerning the strategies used to carry out public policy communication by MUI in supporting the handling of the spread of the COVID-19 virus on Facebook and YouTube. The two media have become widely used by Muslim and other religious communities [20].

2 Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative design with a content analysis approach. Primary data sources on information content in preventing the spread of Covid-19 were collected from the social media accounts of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) from March 16 to June 10, 2020, using the qualitative content approach [21]. The collected data is then grouped by the existing issues using the fatwa issued by MUI [22]. This research also collected secondary data from several online media that provided enrichment in carrying out the data analysis process [23]. Furthermore, Indonesian linguist experts analyzed the quality of the language used by the community to maintain the validity of the data in responding to policies issued by MUI on social media [24].

3 Results and Discussion

Government preparedness in dealing with disease outbreaks requires related institutions, organizations, and stakeholders with direct access to the public. Public involvement is one of the effective ways to deal with pandemics, such as Covid-19. The community acts as the government's mouthpiece in breaking the chain of the virus spread [25].

MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) has been supporting the program launched by President Joko Widodo as a step to minimize the spread of the virus. Therefore, it urges all leaders of Islamic community organizations (ormas) and Islamic shops to support government policies with constructive religious narratives for better public understanding [26]. MUI promotes everyone to oblige to policies and stay away from things that are believed to cause exposure to the disease following the main goal of religion, namely *Al-Dharuriyah al-Khams*, which is associated with five urgent matters in human life, namely religion, soul, lineage, and property [27].



Figure 1. Secretary of the Central MUI Fatwa Commission when reading MUI Fatwa
Source: CNN Indonesia April 3, 2020. Accessed on September 11, 2021

COVID-19 is spreading rapidly in several countries located in the European continent such as England, Italy, France, and Spain as well as in America, Asia, and Africa, with the elderly most vulnerable to its contraction [28]. Therefore, adequate disaster mitigation steps need to be taken into consideration in areas with quickly spread. The Indonesian government has been slow in handling the pandemic, right from the first two recorded cases. For example, the government was very slow in aspects

of the public communication system, where it provided information concerning victim data, mitigated the area for the spread of the virus, the number of hospitals being referred to patients, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) for medical personnel, and the spread model to humans. Similarly, data were collected on citizens who visited abroad, specifically countries with a high spread of the virus. In the early days, this was a matter of government communication to the public, therefore, much information was received by the public through social media, specifically WhatsApp, and which accuracy of information still needs to be questioned [29].

The first positive patient in Indonesia was identified on March 2, 2020, to June 10, 2020, there have been over 34,316 positive cases with 686 recovered and 582 deaths. In response to this pandemic, several regions have imposed large-scale social restrictions (PSBB). Therefore, due to the accelerated high transmission rates, the government cannot work singly in carrying out public communication to various communities, rather it needs the assistance of institutions, organizations, and stakeholders. As a partner of the government, MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) took emergency response steps by issuing a fatwa related to measuring the spread of COVID-19 in the community. The position of fatwas is very important, specifically for the Indonesian Muslim community, because it is directly related to matters of worship such as congregational prayers in mosques, Friday prayers, *Takbir* guidelines in commemorating *Eid al-Fitr*, funeral arrangements, and its relation to the issue of human interaction with various dimensions of life's problems. In the current situation, numerous information was received by the Muslim communities in Indonesia, specifically on social media [30]. Therefore, the existence of a fatwa is urgently needed to neutralize the information chaos on social media related to the presence of the pandemic [31].

Religious authority in a society can be formed through fatwas [32]. Many people in various places still consider that the voice of the ulema embodied in a fatwa has its authority. This is because the condition was evidenced by the establishment of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) as a form of accumulation of ulema authority whose existence was formally considered important and urgent in Indonesian society. Historically, since the establishment of MUI until the present, there have been many fatwas and recommendations as part of Islamic law absorbed in various regulations. The effectiveness of fatwas in dealing with the situation of social change in Indonesia is highly dependent on the compliance of behavior raised by the Muslim community in Indonesia, on the level of obedience to the commands of Allah and His Messenger as well as the authority of ulema as the issuers of fatwa statements [33].

MUI issued many fatwas in response to developing and actual amid society. In recent times, the fatwa issued by MUI is related to addressing the conditions that occur in society due to the pandemic. However, it is not included in the category of positive law without legal force to coerce. Enforcement of the fatwa issued by MUI does not mandate the community to use state apparatus such as the police and the prosecutor's office unless the material has been adopted in the form of laws or regional regulations [34]. The content and fatwa of MUI are only an appeal with no binding nature on Muslims in Indonesia. Table 1 consists of several fatwas issued by MUI related to dealing with the impact of Covid-19 in Indonesia [35].

Table 1. MUI Fatwa Concerning Covid-19

No	MUI Fatwa	Description	Date
1	MUI Fatwa N0 14 of 2020	Organizing worship during the Covid-19 Outbreak	March 16, 2020
2	MUI Fatwa N0 17 of 2020	Guidelines for Praying for Health Workers that wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when caring for and handling Covid-19 Patients	March 26, 2022
3	MUI Fatwa N0 18 of 2020	Guidelines for managing the body (TAJHIZ AL-JANA'IZ) of Muslims infected with the virus	March 27, 2020
4.	MUI Fatwa N0 23 of 2020	Utilization of Zakat, Infaq, and Sadaqah Assets for Combating the Outbreak and its impacts	April 16, 2020
5	MUI Fatwa N0 28 of 2020	Guide to Kafiat Takbir and Eid Prayer During the Covid-19 Pandemic	May 13, 2020

Source: (MUI, 2020)

Islam is essentially a religion that regulates the order of human life concerning the Creator, fellow humans, and the entire universe towards a prosperous life in this world and the hereafter. To achieve all of this, Muslims need to be guided by sources of law, namely the Qur'an and Hadith.

Indonesia is known as a religious society due to its large number of Muslim communities [36]. However, many liberalism and secularism ideologies undermine Indonesian Muslims, either through mainstream media or other cultural exchanges. This strength prioritizes the principle of kinship, and mutual assistance makes Muslims in Indonesia still able to maintain the authenticity of their religious teachings. That this condition is evidenced by the results of a survey conducted by the Alvira Research institute at the end of 2016, which stated that 95% of the Muslim community in Indonesia views the importance of the role of religion in everyday life [37]. This is also seen from several indications, including the increasing tendency of urban communities to investigate religion and the rise in the number of Muslim women populations who wear hijab. The development of Islamic studies is seen through the numerous social media accounts that offer studies of Islamic content in Indonesia, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter [38].

The tendency of urban communities to study religion is not supported by good religious literacy among Muslims. This condition is proven by the fact that some Muslims heed MUI fatwa N0 14 of 2020 concerning "Organizing Worship during pandemics." For instance, during the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims are promoted to perform many worships, specifically the tarawih Sunnah prayers at night. MUI's problems in the field lie in the main tasks they carry out only to appeal from the central level to the regions [39]. This is identified in several big cities in Indonesia, such as Medan, where people still perform the tarawih prayers in mosques and at close distances irrespective of being in the red zone. Therefore, to avoid an increase in the spread of the Covid-19 virus, MUI issued a fatwa concerning the implementation of worship, which was appreciated by the government [40]. Although in Medan City, the fatwa was not fully adhered to by the Muslim community, it succeeded in shaping their perception to obey health protocols during worship.

Circumstances arising from the conditions of social restrictions due to the pandemic have disrupted the economic income of residents as well as their mental and spiritual health. Therefore, the facilities used as places of worship become a reference for the community when mental and spiritual disturbances due to anxiety decrease a family's financial income. This condition also occurs in other areas such as East Java province, with PSBB (Implementation of Large-Scale Social Restrictions) in the City of Pekanbaru from April 17, 2020 [41]. However, the MUI of this city is disappointed because some Muslims do not obey the policy against gathering during the pandemic [42]. The number of victims who died due to the Covid-19 virus outbreak continued to increase, despite being below the number of recovered patients. There are several cases of people refusing to bury the bodies of dead Covid-19 patients due to fear of being infected. The body of NK (38), a nurse at the Kariadi Hospital (RSUP) Semarang, who died on Thursday, April 9, 2020, due to the virus, was rejected by the residents of Sewakul, West Unggaran, Semarang Regency until it was finally moved [43]. The body was recently buried in the family cemetery of the Kariadi Hospital staff. News related to such rejection has gone viral on several social media platforms, including Facebook and YouTube, with readers describing the as awful, despite the services rendered by medical personnel to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus. This information can be seen on the Facebook post of liputan 6 on April 11, 2020, with the title "Central Java Regional Police (POLDA) processing the law for three people suspected of being provocateurs for refusing the burial of a positive Covid-19 corpse." Similarly, on the Facebook account of liputan 6 on May 5, 2020, there was also a refusal from Makassar residents of South Sulawesi. However, these incidents are gratefully regretted by MUI in the Central Java region.

The Indonesian Muslim community has a problem related to the low literacy of the fatwas issued by MUI concerning Covid-19, thereby leading to misunderstanding and an attitude of rejection. Having good religious literacy is the basic capital that needs to be owned by every Muslim community in Indonesia [44]. This is because it aids in responding to various dimensions of social change, specifically those related to the literacy of the MUI fatwa. The attitude of rejection is not only limited to low religious literacy, rather the public communication mechanism carried out by MUI to the community does not work adequately. Therefore, in responding to social changes during the pandemic, public communication policies on the development agenda should be carried out in a planned, measurable, and evaluate able manner [45]. Public policy communication has not been carried out by MUI either at the central or regional levels. That the policy also needs to adopt cultural values and local wisdom, which can be used as a strategic approach to the community. Finally, MUI and the government's perception of the prevention of Covid-19 is similar to the Muslim community [46]. The unification of perceptions between the government and the community is important in the public policy communication process.

Efforts to strengthen the delivery of messages related to the fatwas submitted by MUI in addressing the issue of the virus were carried out, using social media platforms, such as Facebook, which has accelerated the step in delivering message content to the Muslim community in Indonesia. This condition is very reasonable because the Indonesian people are one of the highest countries in which people are active in using social media, specifically in urban areas. There are several MUI posts related to

handling Covid-19 in Indonesia, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 MUI Posts Related Handling Covid-19 on Facebook

No	Date/Month	Theme	Post Content	Number of Followers
1	March 1 18, 2020	Fatwa of the Ulema Council No. 14 of 2020	Organizing worship during the COVID-19 outbreak	292
2	March 2 28, 2020	Ulema Fatwa No. 17 of 2020	Guidelines for the Implementation of Prayer for Health Workers that Wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	98
3	March 3 28, 2020	Fatwa of the Ulema Council No. 18 of 2020	Guidelines for the Management of Muslim Bodies Infected with Covid-19	120
4	April 4 1, 2020	Asrurun Niam Sholeh Lectures	How to worship the medical victims of COVID-19	43
5	April 5 13, 2020	MUI Covid-19 Task Force Public Service	MUI Public Services through lectures using zoom cloud meeting with 300 participants from all over Indonesia	52
6	April 6 13, 2020	MUI Covid-19 Task Force	Religious Consultation Service at mobile number +6285782345238	29
7	April 29 7 15, 2020	National Prayers and Dhikr for the Safety of the Nation	Prayers and Dhikr for the safety of the nation, by kneeling, and pleading to be free from the virus with the vice president	13
8	May 13 8 4, 2020	MUI Fatwa About Zakat in the Time of Covid-19	MUI Fatwa Online Da'wah on Zakat during the pandemic	31

Source: Indonesian Ulema Council website, 2020. Accessed on 11-9-2021

MUI Fatwa No. 14 of 2020 became the post content with the highest public response. This is because it explained the procedures for carrying out worship related to the implementation of Friday, congregational, *Eid al-Fitr*, and *Eid al-Adha* prayers in mosques. It also received responses from several large Islamic Community Organizations (ORMAS) in Indonesia, such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama (NU). These two institutions also provided detailed descriptions related to MUI Fatwa No. 14 of 2020, with the aim that the Muslim community understands its recommendations. However, some Muhammadiyah residents ignored this appeal, as seen in the implementation of worship in the holy month of Ramadan and several public responses on MUI social media.

The East Java Provincial Government imposed large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) in several areas included in the red zone during the celebration of *Eid al-Fitr*, specifically in the implementation of prayers. However, there are still people who do not care about the government's appeal [47].

Psychological anxiety in the community is sometimes one of the biggest obstacles in building risk communication related to handling the Covid-19 virus [48]. This condition also impacts problems in building a communication system for public policies related to preventing the virus, specifically in unifying perceptions between the government and the community. Coping with the pandemic requires collaboration between individuals with anxiety related to a sense of comfort in carrying out certain worship [49]. One of the anxiety factors in this research is associated with not getting a big reward from Allah SWT. This condition is basically due to a lack of information related to communication messages understood by the public and the literacy of the diversity of the Muslim community in responding to situations of social change that occur [50]. In addition to using Facebook by MUI as a social media channel in strengthening public communication related to handling the spread of the Covid-19 virus, YouTube was also utilized. Search results for YouTube content related to the explanation of the MUI fatwa are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. MUI Explanation Content in Preventing Covid-19 Transmission on the YouTube Channel

No	Channel	Theme	Post Content	Number of Viewers
1	Tribune Video.Com	MUI Fatwa	MUI issues a fatwa for worship during the pandemic to prevent the occurrence of Friday prayers	8 thousand
2	CNN Indonesia	MUI Fatwa	It is forbidden to refuse the burial of a dead body due to COVID-19	10 thousand
3	Kompas TV	MUI Fatwa	Muslims are not allowed to pray on Friday due to the virus	79 thousand
4	Kompas TV	MUI Fatwa	MUI issues Fatwa for Fasting and Taraweh amid the Corona Outbreak.	1,1 thousand
5	Kompas TV	MUI Fatwa	Homecoming during the virus is Haram	11 thousand

6	Kompas TV	Died of Corona		MUI declares death due to COVID -19	5,8 thousand
7	Kompas TV	Friday Prayer		Friday prayers are forbidden rather than the Crowd	5,5 thousand
8	CNN TV	MUI Fatwa		MUI issues Fatwa concerning Friday prayers	124 thousand
9	Kompas TV	MUI Fatwa		MUI Issues Fatwa concerning Substitute for Friday prayers	29 thousand
10	Metro News	MUI Fatwa		Friday prayers in the Covid-19 Contagion area were replaced by Duhur prayers at Home	25 thousand
11	Official News	Died of Corona		People that died due to the pandemic are tagged, Martyrs	11 thousand
12	Kompas TV	Corona pandemic		Ma'ruf Amin (Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia) Promotes MUI to Issue Fatwa Haram Mudik	47 thousand
13	Kompas TV	Funeral of Covid-19 bodies according to Islamic Sharia		Rejection of the burial of COVID-19 patients in several areas because residents are worried	21 thousand
14	Kompas TV	MUI Fatwa		Appeal for Worship at Home To minimize crowds and prevent the spread of the virus.	83 thousand
15	Kompas TV	MUI Fatwa		Management of bodies infected with the virus	1,6 thousand
16	Kompas TV	MUI Fatwa		About Friday Prayers Due to the Corona Outbreak	28 thousand
17	Kompas TV	Corona pandemic		Vice President Urges MUI to issue Fatwa Haram Mudik	1.6 thousand
18	Tv MU Channel	MUI Fatwa		MUI prevents Muslims from conducting Friday prayers in the mosque Due to the pandemic	1,6 thousand
19	Kompas TV	MUI Fatwa		MUI Issues Fatwa in Lieu of Friday Prayers in the Middle of the Pandemic, which 176 thousand people attended	
20	Pikiran Rakyat	MUI Fatwa		Eid prayer abolished, supposing the pandemic remains out of control	209 thousand
21	Kompas TV	MUI Fatwa		Ramadan Guide amid the Corona Pandemic	55 thousand
22	CNN Indonesia	Residents Refuse Funeral	Refuse	MUI's Response Concerning Citizens' Rejection of Covid-19 Bodies	37 thousand
23	CNN Indonesia	MUI's Appeal		Not going home is a form of alms	6,9 thousand
24	Berita Satu	MUI's Appeal		MUI urges residents not to worry about the bodies of Coronavirus patients	321 thousand
25	Jack TV Official Channel			The increasing number of COVID-19 virus patients in Indonesia makes MUI urge Muslims to worship Ramadan at home.	177 thousand
26	Berita Satu	MUI's Appeal		Dead Muslims Due to the pandemic are classified as Martyrs	183 thousand
27	Ummat TV	MUI Fatwa		MUI Forms Task Force to Handle the Pandemic	110 thousand
28	Big Boss Channel	MUI's Appeal		9 MUI Fatwas Concerning the Outbreak	134 thousand
29	Legal Access	MUI Fatwa		Guide to Congregational Prayer at the Mosque During the Pandemic	524 thousand
30	KR TV	MUI Fatwa		MUI urges Muslims to follow the advice given by scientists concerning the virus	32 thousand
31	Muslim TV	MUI's Appeal		A Complete Explanation of Understanding MUI Fatwa To Anticipate Covid-19 on Friday Prayers Due to the Corona Virus	38 thousand
32	TV MU Chanel	MUI Fatwa		MUI Refuses to Empty the Mosque	505 thousand
33	Nusantara TV	MUI's Appeal		There is no reason to refuse funerals for dead COVID-19 victims	7 thousand
33	Medcom Id	MUI's Appeal		MUI Fatwa Commission Officially issues a Fatwa Concerning the Implementation of Worship due to the pandemic.	9,6 thousand
34	Kumparan	MUI Fatwa		Homecoming when the Corona Virus is Haram, Refers to MUI Fatwa N0 14 of 2020	2,4 thousand
35	Kompas TV	MUI Fatwa		Preparations for Ramadan in the Middle of the Spread of the Corona Virus	19 thousand
36	Kompas TV	Appeal		MUI Explanation on Ramadan Guide Amid the Corona Pandemic	86 thousand

Source: Obtained from various video content on Youtube.com, 2020.

Some YouTube content provides a related explanation to the MUI fatwa on the current Covid-19 pandemic situation in Indonesia. Those that responded to the YouTube content on the issue of worship occupy the two highest ranks. The first is Legal Access, which consists of post content titled "Guidelines

for Congregational Prayer at the Mosque during the Covid-19 Virus Pandemic" with 524,000 viewers. The second is TV MU Channel, with the post content "MUI refuses to empty the mosque" with an audience of 505,000. Meanwhile, the third is Berita Satu, which consists of the post content "MUI urges residents not to worry about the bodies of Corona patients," with an audience of 321,000. These YouTube content channels indicate that the issue of worship during the pandemic is a serious concern for Muslims that respond to conditions of social change through social media. From several comment fields available on the YouTube account channel, some people understand the content of MUI Fatwa No. 14 of 2020. However, the majority showed a level of confusion and resignation about the current situation.

Social media has changed the form of communication related to public policy issues, specifically those related to a particular institution. Therefore, it takes a concept that has the same content understanding, with the same indicator formulation [51]. Furthermore, the system consists of a dialogue agreed upon by organizational institutions and government organizations. Different points of view cause interference in the interaction process of public policy communication [52]. Some of the steps used in the study of public policy communication when measuring the quality of the public's response to the delivery of MUI fatwa messages are still weak. These results are analyzed from the response that develops on social media, which are in the assessment form. Subsequently, there is no common ground concerning the unification of perceptions between MUI, the government, and the Muslim community in Indonesia [53].

This research aims to analyze the critical response of the MUI social media user community concerning public policy communication during the pandemic. The social media approach through Facebook and YouTube content shows that the policy results communication submitted by MUI on social media are still weak [54]. This is evidenced by several findings obtained in this research. First, many people who responded to the policies issued by MUI related to handling the spread of the pandemic failed to approve several fatwas issued, specifically those concerning the procedures for carrying out worship during the pandemic [55]. Second, MUI public policy communication system on social media in handling the Covid-19 virus is less successful, one of the contributing factors is the issue of authority, which is a non-government institution. The appeal for fatwas issued for the benefit of the community, specifically Muslims in Indonesia, is not supported by the power of law through state institutions capable of providing legal sanctions. It also aims to benefit the people related to policies in breaking the chain of the virus spread [56]. Third, in formulating the content of public policy communication messages on social media, MUI needs to pay attention to the level of religious literacy of the Muslim community. This is because, with the selection of message content that most people easily accept, the unification of perceptions between MUI and other state institutions becomes related to handling the same goal of eradicating the virus. This unification of perceptions is limited to state institutions, more importantly, the Muslim community while considering the cultural values and local wisdom. Therefore, MUI, the government, and the community have the same perception of strengthening policy communication. Figure 2 shows a technical understanding related to the communication policies of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI).

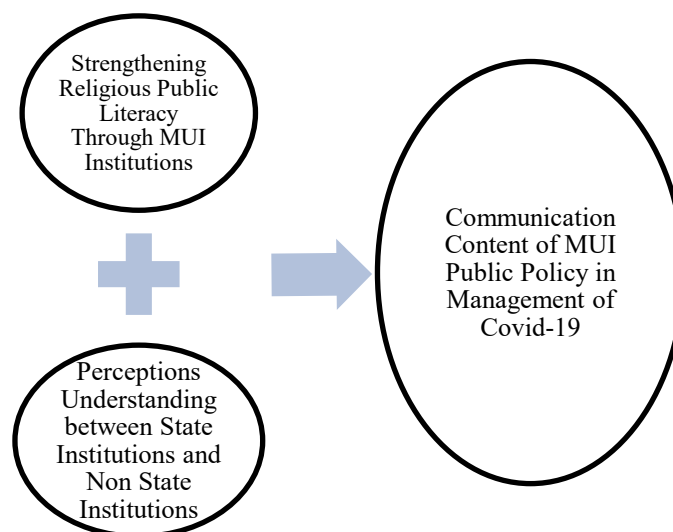


Figure 2. Design of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Public Communication Policy Process in Supporting the Handling of Covid-19

Figure 2 shows that the form of communication design for the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI)

public policy in supporting the handling of the pandemic is in the form of an institutionalized communication system. The various institutions involved in solving the same issue in society are built with the same indicators of the public policy communication process. Therefore, the message content selected needs to be thoroughly tested against the ability to capture the content understood by the Muslim community in Indonesia. Furthermore, there are no mistakes in understanding the content of the message to some people during the implementation phase [56].

4 Conclusion

This study has examined the critical response of the Muslim community in Indonesia regarding the Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) related to practices of Muslim worship in handling Covid-19 that developed on social media through the official MUI account. By using a qualitative method through analysis of Muslim community responses and the accuracy of language meaning confirmation by Indonesian linguist experts, the study found a high level of public response to the MUI fatwa regarding the practices of Muslim worships, such as congregational prayers in mosques, funeral arrangements, and Islamic holidays' celebration. The MUI fatwa has created different perceptions among the Indonesian Muslim community. Some Muslim communities considered the fatwa to be inappropriate so it does not need to be implemented. On the contrary, some other Muslim communities considered the fatwa very important to be applied in handling Covid-19. Our findings show the importance for the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) to design proper public policy communication with various considerations, specifically in religious literacy concerning the issues associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. This is in addition to the communication content included in social media, which is very strategic in delivering public messages to the community, specifically the Muslims in Indonesia. Therefore, strengthening the institutional position of MUI in religious institutions with a high level of trust needs to be further improved. This condition depends on the level of benefit of the developing problems, specifically in handling the pandemic with interconnections between institutions supported by the state in the form of strong regulations. The present study only focuses its analysis on the response of the Muslim community to the MUI fatwa related to the handling of Covid-19 that was conveyed through social media, especially Facebook and YouTube Channels. Thus, it failed to provide a broad picture of the response of the Muslim community in Indonesia. To produce comprehensive findings, future studies are hoped to use extensive and representative data sources and data collection techniques. Additionally, to obtain more accurate research results, future researchers would conduct interviews with selected religious, community, and MUI leaders in all provinces in Indonesia.

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