



## COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OF THE BAJENIS DISTRICT RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS OFFICE IN PROVIDING INFORMATION SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY

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### ABSTRACT

Public information services at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) require a planned, adaptive, and contextual communication strategy so that religious service information can be clearly received by the public. This study aims to analyze the communication strategy of the Bajenis District Office of Religious Affairs in providing information services to the public, identify communication barriers faced, and explain efforts made to overcome these barriers. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Informants were determined through a purposive sampling technique, including KUA officials, religious instructors, and community service users. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, while data analysis used the Miles and Huberman interactive model that includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results show that the Bajenis District KUA implements a hybrid communication strategy by combining face-to-face interpersonal communication through direct services, counseling, religious study groups, wiritan, Friday sermons, and community leader networks, as well as digital communication through WhatsApp and social media. Barriers faced include differences in the level of public information literacy, limited human resources, geographical distance, and technical constraints in the use of digital media. Efforts include simplifying messages, using communicative language, optimizing the role of religious instructors, coordinating with regional officials, and adapting communication media based on community needs. This research confirms that participatory, contextual, and media convergence-based communication strategies can improve the effectiveness of information delivery and the quality of religious public services at the sub-district level.

**Keywords:** communication strategy, KUA, information services, public communication, hybrid media

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Effective public services are determined not only by the availability of administrative procedures, but also by the institution's ability to manage communication clearly, purposefully, and easily understood by the public. In the context of public organizations, communication serves as a crucial instrument for conveying service information, shaping citizen understanding, increasing participation, and building public trust in government institutions. A sound communication strategy enables public institutions to tailor message content, media, and communication approaches to the characteristics of the communities they serve. This is crucial because inaccurately conveyed service information can lead to misunderstandings, delays in administrative processing, and a decline in the quality of public services. Therefore, a communication strategy should be viewed as an integral part of public service governance that is transparent, accountable, and responsive to community needs (Putri & Rahman, 2023; Rahman & Putra, 2023).

The Religious Affairs Office (KUA) is a technical implementation unit of the Ministry of Religious Affairs at the sub-district level that plays a crucial role in providing religious services to the public. The scope of KUA services includes marriage registration, marriage guidance, waqf (waqf), zakat (alms), family guidance, religious counseling, religious moderation, and various other religious administrative services. Because they interact directly with the public, the KUA is required not only to perform bureaucratic functions but also to develop humanistic, persuasive, and contextual service communications. In the era of digital transformation, these demands are increasingly complex, as the public requires fast, accurate, and accessible access to information through various communication channels. Therefore, the KUA needs to integrate face-to-face communication, print media, and digital media to ensure service information reaches diverse community groups (Sari & Nugroho, 2025).

The KUA's communication strategy for providing public information is becoming increasingly important because people have varying levels of information literacy, educational background, access to technology, and communication habits. Some people can receive information through digital media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media, but others are more effectively reached through interpersonal communication, direct counseling, religious study groups, religious leaders, Friday sermons, or local religious forums. This situation demonstrates that public service communications cannot be achieved through a single channel; instead, a hybrid approach that combines conventional and digital communication is required. The hybrid communication model in public services is considered relevant because it can expand the reach of information while maintaining social closeness between officials and the public (Rholl et al., 2023; Sari & Nugroho, 2025).

In practice, the implementation of public service communication strategies does not always run smoothly. Digital literacy gaps, limited staff resources, limited geographic distance, and low information accessibility for some communities can impact the effectiveness of message delivery. These obstacles can also lead to public misunderstandings of service flows, administrative requirements, regulatory changes, or the use of digital service systems. Previous research indicates that the digital literacy gap and limited staff capacity remain major challenges in transforming public service

communication (Lubis & Kurniawan, 2024). In the context of the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), these communication barriers need to be addressed through message simplification, the use of communicative language, optimizing the role of religious instructors, and selecting communication media appropriate to community needs.

Bajenis District has a heterogeneous community in terms of education, information literacy, social conditions, and access to technology. These characteristics require the Bajenis District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) to implement a communication strategy that is adaptive, participatory, and based on local community needs. The KUA must not only convey information formally through service offices but also utilize social and religious networks familiar to the community, such as religious instructors, community leaders, village officials, religious study groups (Majelis Taklim), and religious forums. From a public service communication perspective, communication effectiveness is greatly influenced by the ability of officials to understand the community's social context, build interpersonal relationships, and tailor messages to communication channels trusted by residents (Andzani & Sitorus, 2023; Tian et al., 2023). Thus, the Bajenis District KUA's communication strategy can be understood as a dynamic process that connects service regulations, community needs, and local socio-religious values.

Several previous studies have discussed the quality of public services, organizational communication, and the digitalization of government services. However, studies specifically examining the communication strategies of the sub-district-level Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in providing information services to the public still need to be developed, particularly by examining the integration of structural-digital and cultural-dialogical approaches. Some studies still view information services as a one-way technical procedure, thus failing to fully explain how service messages are designed, mediated, tailored to citizen characteristics, and evaluated in everyday social interactions.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze the communication strategies of the Bajenis District Office of Religious Affairs in providing information services to the public, identify communication barriers encountered, and explain efforts made to overcome these barriers. This research is expected to provide academic contributions to the development of public organization communication studies and practical contributions to improving the quality of KUA information services to be more planned, participatory, and contextual.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the communication strategies of the Bajenis District Religious Affairs Office (KUA) in providing information services to the public. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on an in-depth understanding of the communication process, message delivery patterns, media used, communication barriers, and the KUA's adaptive efforts to reach communities with diverse social characteristics and information literacy. Descriptive methods were used to systematically describe public service communication practices at the Bajenis District KUA, both through face-to-face communication, print media, and digital media. The research focused on communication strategies, information service implementation, barriers that emerged in the communication process, and steps taken by the KUA to improve the effectiveness of information delivery to the public. The study was conducted from March to April 2026 at the Bajenis District Religious Affairs Office.

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Research informants were determined using a purposive sampling technique, which involves selecting informants intentionally based on their involvement, knowledge, and experience with information services at the Bajenis District KUA. Informants included the Head of the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), employees or staff handling information services, religious instructors, and service users who had accessed information or handled services at the KUA within the past year. Internal informants were selected because KUA officials are the ones who design, implement, and evaluate service communication strategies. Meanwhile, service users were selected to obtain the perspective of the information recipients, so that the data obtained reflected not only the institution's perspective but also the experiences of the public as service targets. Data collection techniques included in-depth semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to explore communication strategies, media selection, obstacles, and problem-solving efforts. Observations were conducted to observe communication interactions between officers and the public during daily service delivery, while documentation was used to review service standard operating procedures (SOPs), information archives, publication media, and other documents supporting the research findings (Adriani, 2023).

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the data reduction stage, researchers selected and grouped data from interviews, observations, and documentation based on key themes, namely communication strategies, media channels, communication barriers, and the KUA's adaptation efforts. In the data presentation stage, the reduced information was organized into descriptive narratives and a thematic matrix to more clearly analyze the relationships between findings. Next, conclusions were drawn through interpretation of emerging communication patterns, including how the KUA combines interpersonal communication, social media, WhatsApp, print media, and socio-religious networks in providing public information.

To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation and technical triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from KUA officials, religious instructors, and community service users, while technical triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. Through this process, the data obtained is expected to have strong credibility and provide a comprehensive picture of the Bajenis District KUA's communication strategy in providing information to the public (Ascarya Academia, 2022).

### 3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The research findings indicate that the Bajenis District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA)'s communication strategy for providing information services to the public utilizes a hybrid approach, combining interpersonal communication, print media, and digital media. This strategy is not only aimed at conveying administrative information but also at ensuring that the public correctly understands service procedures, such as marriage registration requirements, marriage guidance, waqf (endowments), religious counseling, and other religious service information. In public service practice, communication

strategy cannot be understood solely as the process of sending messages, but also as the activity of planning messages, selecting channels, adjusting language, and evaluating public response (Rahman & Putra, 2023). This is evident in the Bajenis District KUA's efforts to utilize face-to-face communication for those requiring direct explanations, while also utilizing WhatsApp and social media to expedite information distribution. One informant from the KUA stated,

*"We can't just rely on announcements at the office, because people have different ways of receiving information. Some understand better when explained in person, while others receive information more quickly via WhatsApp or social media"* (Informant 1, interview, March 2026).

Field findings show that face-to-face communication remains the dominant channel and is considered the most effective, especially for communities unfamiliar with digital services. Interpersonal communication is conducted through direct office services, administrative consultations, outreach, religious study groups (Majelis Taklim), religious leaders (Perwiritan), Friday sermons, and community religious forums. This strategy demonstrates that the Bajenis District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) not only implements bureaucratic communication but also cultural communication, utilizing socio-religious spaces trusted by the community. In public service communication studies, message effectiveness is greatly influenced by the communicator's closeness to the audience and their ability to understand the recipient's social context (Putri & Rahman, 2023). A religious leader explained,

*"If information is conveyed through religious study groups or Perwiritan, people are usually quicker to ask questions and understand more easily because the atmosphere is intimate and less formal"* (Informant 2, interview, March 2026).

This quote demonstrates that cultural-religious channels play a strategic role in bridging formal KUA information with local community understanding.

In addition to face-to-face communication, the Bajenis District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) has also begun optimizing digital media as part of its information service strategy. WhatsApp is used for rapid coordination with regional officials, community leaders, extension workers, and specific service groups, while social media is utilized to expand the reach of information to communities more familiar with digital platforms. This strategy aligns with the concept of hybrid communication, which emphasizes the convergence of conventional and digital media so that public services can reach diverse community groups (Rholl et al., 2023; Sari & Nugroho, 2025). The use of digital media accelerates information dissemination but does not completely replace face-to-face communication, as digital literacy skills are not yet evenly distributed. Therefore, the Bajenis District KUA's communication strategy is adaptive: digitalization is used for efficiency, while interpersonal communication is maintained to ensure understanding, clarification, and emotional closeness with the community.

The main obstacles identified in this study relate to differences in education levels, information literacy, digital literacy, limited human resources, and the geographic distance of some communities from the KUA office. Not all residents are able to understand service information in formal written form or digital announcements, resulting in frequent repeated questions regarding service requirements and procedures. This situation demonstrates that the digitalization of public services does not automatically increase communication effectiveness if it is not accompanied by the

public's ability to access, understand, and use information. The digital literacy gap is a significant challenge in the transformation of public service communication because it can create a new distance between institutions and citizens who are not yet familiar with digital media (Lubis & Kurniawan, 2024). One service user said,

*"Sometimes information is already available in groups or social media, but we still feel more confident asking directly at the office or with an extension worker, so we don't bring the wrong files"* (Informant 3, interview, April 2026).

This statement indicates that trust in direct communication remains strong, especially for services related to documents and regulations.

To address these challenges, the Bajenis District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) simplified its messaging, adjusted its language, and optimized the role of religious instructors as local communicators. Initially, administrative and formal service information was re-presented in simpler language for easier public understanding. This strategy is crucial because public service messages must consider the recipient's abilities, not just the completeness of the information. From the perspective of official instructional communication, clarity of articulation, mastery of material, and the ability to simplify regulations are crucial factors in improving the quality of information services (Tian et al., 2023). One service staff member stated, "We usually re-explain the service requirements in simple language, even writing out bullet points if necessary to avoid confusion for the public when processing documents" (Informant 4, interview, April 2026). This quote demonstrates that the KUA's communication strategy relies not only on the media but also on the skills of officials in crafting messages for practical understanding.

Research findings also indicate that coordination with regional officials and community leaders is a contributing factor to the effectiveness of the Bajenis District KUA's communication strategy. Service information is not only delivered directly by KUA employees, but also relayed through sub-district heads, village heads, neighborhood heads, religious instructors, and community leaders who have close social ties with residents. This pattern demonstrates that public service communication at the local level requires a participatory and multi-layered communication network. In the context of sub-district-level religious institutions, the effectiveness of information is greatly influenced by the legitimacy of the communicator and public trust in the channels used (Andzani & Sitorus, 2023). Therefore, the Bajenis District KUA communication strategy can be understood as a public organization communication practice that is not solely based on bureaucratic structures but also on socio-religious relations. This approach strengthens the chances of messages being received more widely because information is conveyed through figures and forums close to the community's lives.

Interpretatively, the Bajenis District KUA communication strategy demonstrates a shift from a one-way service communication pattern to a more dialogical, adaptive, and contextual one. The KUA acts not only as an information provider but also as a facilitator of public understanding of state religious services. These findings reinforce the view that effective public communication must balance structural, digital, and cultural dimensions so that information does not stop at delivering messages, but is truly understood and utilized by the public (Pratama et al., 2023; Swart, 2023). The novelty of this research finding lies in the understanding that the KUA communication strategy at the sub-district level cannot be separated from the convergence between digital service modernization

and a cultural-dialogical approach through local religious networks. Thus, the effectiveness of KUA information services in Bajenis District is determined by the institution's ability to select appropriate media, simplify messages, strengthen the role of local communicators, and maintain humanistic two-way communication with the community.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the communication strategy of the Bajenis District Religious Affairs Office in providing information services to the public is carried out through a hybrid approach that combines face-to-face communication, print media, digital media, and community socio-religious networks. This strategy is evident in the use of direct services in the office, religious counseling, religious study groups, wiritan, Friday sermons, WhatsApp, and social media as a means of disseminating public service information. The research findings indicate that the communication approach used by the Bajenis District Religious Affairs Office is adaptive and contextual because it is adjusted to the literacy level, information needs, and characteristics of the local community. However, the implementation of the communication strategy still faces several obstacles, such as differences in education levels and information literacy among the community, limited apparatus resources, geographical distance constraints, and unequal access to digital media. To overcome these obstacles, the Bajenis District Religious Affairs Office simplifies messages, uses more communicative language, optimizes the role of religious instructors, and coordinates with regional officials and community leaders. Thus, a planned, participatory, and locally needs-based communication strategy has proven to play an important role in increasing the effectiveness of information delivery, strengthening public understanding, and supporting the quality of religious public services at the sub-district level.

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