

Digital Interactions in Church Communities Attributable to Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: COVID-19 significantly the church communities in Indonesia. After the Large-Scale Social Restrictions, churches can no longer conduct face-to-face services at church premises and turn to digital interactions. Interactions with the Congregation are carried out through live streaming, mainly on YouTube Channel, mobile applications specifically made for this need, website, and social media channels. This research was conducted within the broader area without restrictions on Indonesia's territory. The survey method, distributed online questionnaires targeted towards church communities, was used for this research. For this reason, we distributed questionnaires to congregations from various Christian and Catholic Churches in Indonesia using purposive sampling. We collected 159 responses for this study. The results were calculated with descriptive statistical analysis using AMOS 24 software tools. The research and analysis found no influence from the use of digital interactions on the condition of the church mass. Although there was a sense of loss of kairos moment, the respondents stated that they had no problem with digital interactions regardless of whether it was not as good as face-to-face interaction. This situation needs to be a concern for preachers to make digital interactions enjoyable and intimate. This study found that respondents still prefer face-to-face interactions to digital interactions.


1 INTRODUCTION


To break the chain of spreading the Coronavirus (COVID-19), on June 1, 2020, the Government of the Indonesian Information Portal (Indonesia.go.id) (F.WH, 2021) announced a Guideline to Activities in Houses of Worship during the New Normal Period. These implementing regulations are listed in the Minister of Religion Circular Letter Number 15 of 2020 concerning Guidelines for Organizing Religious Activities in Houses of Worship in Realizing a Productive and Safe Society from Covid-19 Pandemic Period. Understanding the pandemic itself is a severe disease and spreads not only in one part of the country but throughout the world (C. Hawker, 2005). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is very multidimensional and uncertain (Sulkowski, 2020). From the effect on the economic sector in education


to spiritual organizations such as churches. COVID-19 pandemic has shifted churches into a somewhat revolutionary way of being church today (Pillay, 2020). They respond to the appeal of the Government and health protocols from WHO to carrying out church services at home (Silitonga, 2020). Thus, the function of the church building as a place for worship was replaced by live streaming (PGI, 2020). The fellowship structure is no longer a forum for prayer but a medium of communication (Surna, 2020).

People return to enjoying services from home using digital tools such as YouTube, video conferencing, or websites. As said by Samson, "the church returns to its roots, as the early history of the church being formed services in the house" (Simon, 1999).

Research conducted on the island of Sulawesi regarding Toraja digital interactions at the Borang

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Borang Church states that congregants/people can participate in online worship more seriously (Mongan, 2020). In contrast to the research conducted by Suriawan, 66.4% of the Congregation in DKI Jakarta stated that the church building is still a place of worship fellowship that the community wanted during COVID-19 (Surna, 2020). Does a similar opinion occur in church congregations in other areas in Indonesia? This situation tries to cover in this study.

Specifically, this study uses the first variable, namely the congregation/people, and the second variable, namely digital interaction. The word "congregation" in Indonesian vocabulary refers specifically to the Christian community, not other religious communities (Eliade, 1987). Meanwhile, digital interaction means the use of websites, YouTube, video conferences, and mobile devices

Regarding the manifestation of each variable, the main focus is the change in attitudes, feelings, and thoughts on the main subject of the Christian community, namely the congregation. The second focus is on the tools for digital interaction and their influence on the main issue. A study states that with the COVID-19 pandemic, live church streaming causes a loss of "kairos moments" in events delivered during services such as praising God, religious rituals, and worship (Pillay, 2020). Interestingly, the congregation/people in Indonesia deal with this. Do they have the same feeling about the feeling of "kairos moment" lost with digital interactions? So this too is one of the things that was discovered in this study.

Furthermore, we will check the respondents' attitudes regarding Christian congregations consisting of various denominations and Catholics. The Catholic way of worship, which is called a mass, is slightly different from Christian worship, where there is communion, the prayer room has more symbols, and a sacrament atmosphere full of worship rituals. On the other hand, Christian worship procedures are more straightforward and do not use communion every week. Which later will bring a difference in the "kairos moment" of the congregation in the live streaming service.

2 METHODS

It was using a cross-sectional study conducted for church mass. One hundred fifty-nine people filled the questionnaire form by purposive sampling targeted towards the church mass. For data processing, it used the IBM SPSS AMOS 24 application that using Structural Equation Model. SEM is a statistical modeling technique that combines factor analysis and

regression or path analysis statistical analysis tools, combining factor analysis and regression (Boateng, 2020). In a quantitative study, there are two types of variables. Once is unobserved variable or construct variable as the variable that can't measure directly, except manifest variable. This variable using symbols as an ellipse. Secondly is the manifest variable, which represents the measurement factor for the constructed variable. (Santoso, 2018). Its symbol is a rectangle.

In this case, the dependent variable is the congregation as the variable affected by the changes in the independent variable (Boateng, 2020). Secondly, an independent variable is a variable that is manipulated to observe a change in a dependent variable and is represented by Digital Interaction (Boateng, 2020).

There are two testing steps: Construct Testing and Full Structure Model Testing, to get the relations between the two variables above. The target to be achieved is to obtain a Final Model and Result of Statistical formulation in Digital Interactions in Church Community.

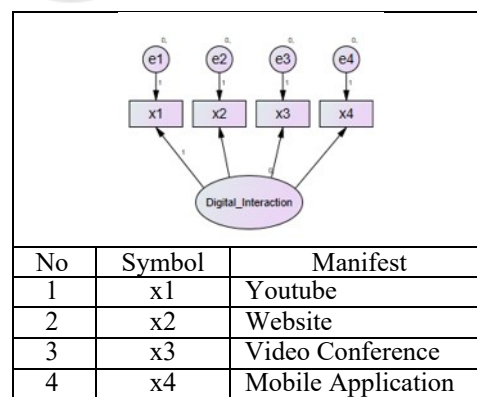
2.1 Construct Testing

In the following is the testing of Two construct variables, Digital Interaction, and the Congregation variable

2.1.1 Digital Interaction

First of all, the Calculation of Digital Interaction Construct with IBM Amos 24. The manifest variable of this Construct figured and explained is in the following Table 1.

Table 1: Digital Interaction.



As we know, YouTube claims to be a means of freedom in obtaining or distributing information (<https://www.youtube.com/intl/id/about/>). While a website can be the work of an individual or an

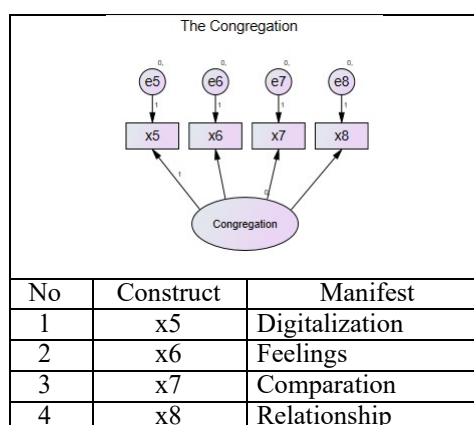
organization/company with a discussion referring to one or more specific topics or specific interests. (https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Situs_web), in this study, the website belongs to the church organization as a tool for interacting with congregations. Parties or more in different locations can simultaneously.

Interact by using audio and video simultaneously (https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konferensi_video). Another thing this study observed that the developed mobile application was accessible, appealing, and pedagogically constructive for users. (mobile application). Therefore, these four devices are using in his research as manifests of digital interaction. The results of the Digital Interaction calculation show that the four manifestations of Digital Construction meet the requirements for the value of $P < 0$, so there is no need for the trimming process, and all of the variables manifests is used

2.1.2 The Congregation

In the following Table 2, we can see the manifest variable of the congregation. There is a factor of solemn loss when using digital interaction (Pillay, 2020). Based on that research, the feeling factor (x6) choose as the manifest variable in the congregation. The other manifests "have the choice of digital exchange for spiritual problems (x5)", the comparison of this situation with face-to-face activities (x7), and the relationship with the preacher is as good as face-to-face (x8). In understanding the Digital literacies for Ministry, Oliver states the need for preachers to understand the social presence that incorporates online and in-person engagement. (Oliver, 2020)

Table 2: The Congregation.



The variable x5 represents the views of the congregation/ people on the problem of church digitalization. The problem of attendance in church is

related to fellowship issues, where the congregation is present to share and talk (Bryson, 2020) likewise, remembering that the sacredness factor in a service is a "kairos moment" that can be lost when people use the digital system in the service (Pillay, 2020). Therefore the construct x6 interprets the "Felling." Furthermore, comparing feelings of the people due to off-site and on-site meetings, we need to reach this to be construed with variable namely "Comparison." The next thing is the relationship of the people to the preacher whether the digitalization system changes the level of that relationship

The calculated estimated Variable Congregation results show that all constructs meet their values, so there is no need to do a trimming process.

2.2 Full Structure Testing

Complete structure Model testing divided into two, namely Testing for Model Accuracy and Testing for Standardized Regression Weight

2.2.1 Testing for Model Accuracy

The variety of many indices that show the accuracy of the models we take, specifically CMIN, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation), and PCFI (Parsimony adjustment to the CFI) (Ferdinand, 2006) The following result from testing the accuracy of the model:

- The limit of $CMIN/DF \leq 2.00$, the Calculation: $CMIN/DF 1,137$ This means that this model is fit.
- Limit of GFI between 0 (not fit) to 1 (very Fit), the result of GFI is .989 show that the model is within the applicable or precise limits to the data.
- RMSEA standard value ≤ 0.08 , RMSEA 0.029 results, so the model still displays the accuracy of the model.
- PNFI has a limit of ≥ 0.5 ; In this situation, the result of PNFI 0.671 shows that the model is even within the proper sets. The conclusion is that the model has acceptable certainty.

2.2.2 Testing for Standardized Regression Weight

Complete structure model testing is used to determine a relationship between the two digital interaction constructs and congregation. How does digital interaction affect the condition of the community who participate in the digital church activities? The following Figure 1 is a figure of the Full structure Model.

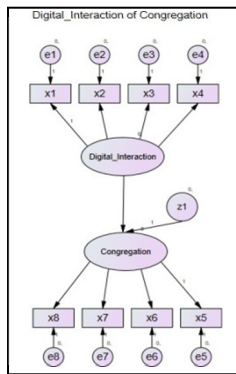


Figure 1: Model DI of C.

2.3 Hypothesis Testing

There is a hypothesis as follows: Ho: Digital Interaction does not affect Congregation H1: Digital Interaction affects congregation Where the value for Possibility (P-Value) is set at 0.10. If the p-value is > than alpha, then Ho will be rejected, and H1 will be accepted

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Respondents

There are 159 respondents with domicile scattered from several cities in Java, NTT, Ternate, Sumatra, Bali, and Sulawesi. There are 93 Christians (58%) and 66 Catholics (42%). The respondents' jobs in the order of the best are private-employees (36%), followed by entrepreneurs (13%), mothers (13%), professional employees (12%), and civil servants (4%). The most significant percentage were congregants/ ordinary people (62%), followed by those who were active in church activities (33%), followed by less active members (5%).

3.2 Digital Interaction

As we know, social media platforms as a means of outreach, information sharing, and as a virtual community navigated the impact of COVID-19. The religious communities adapt forcibly connected shifts to social media platforms such as Facebook, mobile application, and YouTube. (Bukovich, 2020). In table 3 below show the comparison of digital interaction differentiated based on Catholic and Christian-respondents.

The results are pretty remarkable: YouTube gets the congregation to use the first position as the favorite tool. At the same time, a website is a communication tool that was never seen by 54% of Catholics and 44% of Christians. Meanwhile, video conferencing such as zoom is used occasionally for interaction. The surprising thing is that mobile applications like WhatsApp and occasionally use them to interact concerning spiritual matters. There is a difference here wherein long-distance interaction. Catholics use mobile applications more than video conferencing. On the other hand, Christians use more tools such as zoom and meet to interact with mobile device software such as watch apps.

3.3 Congregation

The responses of the congregation for the four questionnaire statements are as follows:

Statements 1. During the time of COVID19, I was excited about using Digital Church interactions

Table 4 of the results of variable Manifest x5 shows that both Catholics and Christians agree/ strongly agree with the statement that they are happy with the use of digital interaction (65%). It seems that Christians have successfully carried out the willingness of the heart to adapt to the Covid situation (Missa, 2020) by participating in ecclesiastical digital interactions in Indonesia. This result is in line with a survey conducted by PGI that 95.4% of respondents agreed to worship driven digitally (PGI, 2020). In this

Table 3: Use of Digital Tools to Interact.

	Catholic				Christian			
	Never	Occasionally	Often	Very Often	Never	Occasionally	Often	Very Often
You Tube	9%	26%	29%	36%	3%	11%	29%	57%
Website	54%	17%	15%	14%	44%	27%	10%	19%
Video Conference	23%	32%	29%	16%	10%	35%	30%	25%
Mobile application	44%	29%	7%	20%	30%	34%	14%	22%

case, digital interaction has advantages because of Missa's observations, saying that the adaptation carried out opens opportunities for missions through digital media to reach unlimited outreach (Missa, 2020).

Table 4: Results of Manifest Variable x5.

Statement	Christian	Catholic
Strongly disagree/ Disagree	10%	14%
Neutral	26%	21%
Strongly agree/ Agree	65%	65%

Statement 2. In my opinion, online services do not create a different feeling of sanctity than when in face-to-face assistance.

Table 5: Results of Manifest Variable x6.

Statement	Christian	Catholic
Strongly disagree/ Disagree	40%	45%
Neutral	25%	23%
Strongly agree/ Agree	35%	32%

Statements of different feelings of sanctity due to online services get a reasonably high response from Catholic respondents (45%) compared to Christians (40%). This study result is by research on Jerry Palley where the feeling of "Lost Kairos" moment due to online worship is obtained (Pillay, 2020)

Statement 3: I prefer services/meetings/meetings using digital online rather than face to face

Table 6: Results of Manifest Variable x7.

Statement	Christian	Catholic
Strongly disagree/ Disagree	39%	70%
Neutral	26%	16%
Strongly agree/ Agree	35%	14%

Compared to the online system for face-to-face worship/meetings/meetings, 70% of Catholic respondents stated they preferred face-to-face. In contrast, Christian respondents were more flexible with 39% results, meaning they did not object to the online system. Even though the results of observations and hearings on the implementation of worship in Catholic churches, this study found that digital media was very effective for ministry in this pandemic situation (Missa, 2020).

Statement 4. I think the relationship with the preacher using digital equipment is as good as a physical meeting

Table 7: Results of Manifest variable x8.

Statement	Christian	Catholic
Strongly disagree/ Disagree	40%	50%
Neutral	25%	16%
Strongly agree/ Agree	35%	34%

Half of the Catholic respondents said that the relationship with the preacher using digital media is as good as face-to-face interaction (50%), meaning that 50% think there is a disruption in the relationship with the preacher. For Christians, 60% feel that the relationship is disturbed. This finding is the same as previous researchers found about social implications on digital interaction (Adegboyega, 2021). On the other hand, it shows the struggling of the Christian leader to maintain the community's relation. Meanwhile, one preacher said, "Preaching to an Empty Room," It is hard to understand what the community feels in this virtual meet. (Bukovich, 2020). However, spiritual speakers in digital media know convening hybrid and digital communities (Oliver, Duncan 2020) to better their followers. Hopefully, it can help, so the community relation with preacher is as good as everyday situations.

3.4 Result for Calculated Estimated Full Structure Model

Obtained a P value of 127 which means $p\text{-value} > \alpha$ ($\alpha = 0.10$). which is 0.027 difference it means that H_1 is rejected, and H_0 "Digital Interaction does not affect the Congregation" is accepted. Comparing with earlier research by Surna, this interpretation is the same (Surna, 2020), whereas the digital interaction in the church is accepted well by the congregation. However, the total effect of the variables on the Congregation variable was .188 it means there is little effect on the social distancing of the church for the community. The following is a table of the calculated Estimated Full Structure Model using Amos 24 software.

Table 8: Result of model DI to C.

	Estimate	SE.	CR.	P
Congregation < --- Digital Interaction	.188	.123	.525	.127
x1 < --- Digital Interaction	1.000			
x2 < --- Digital Interaction	2.031	.467	4.346	***
x3 < --- Digital Interaction	1.663	.356	4.671	***
x4 < --- Digital Interaction	2.292	.533	4.296	***
x5 < --- Congregation	1.000			
x6 < --- Congregation	1.597	.329	4.862	***
x7 < --- Congregation	1.347	.284	4.736	***
x8 < --- Congregation	1.996	.400	4.995	***

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study found no direct influence from the use of digital interactions on the condition of the church mass. However, there was a lost sense of kairós moment, even though they said they did not have a problem with digital interactions and even tended to like it. On the other hand, a social impact of meeting exchange found that most respondents stated that interaction with preachers through digital interaction is not as good as face-to-face interaction. Of course, this situation needs to be a concern for preachers to make digital interactions enjoyable, intimate and build people's faith. A further impact, there is a tendency that respondents still prefer face-to-face interactions to digital interactions.

As we know that the catholic church uses more symbols than the Christian. It is guessed there is a different feeling of sacredness when the service is held in church compared to online on.. therefore the aim for this study is to compare this feeling...and finding that feeling of lost kairós moment in the sermon is greater for catholic than Christian respondent

This research can be broader in terms of respondent... by asking the opinion of the preacher. I guess they have specific difficulties, such as they need to use digital meeting tools that they never use before, especially for the urban churches, so all of this needs to be discovered more.

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