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Communication Barriers in Comprehending GKII Mission Month Preaching in 2022

Krido SISWANTO

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Simpson Ungaran,
Jawa Tengah 50516, Indonesia.

Email: kridosiswanto@sttsimpson.ac.id

Elisjul Chaiska NOVEL

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Simpson Ungaran,
Jawa Tengah 50516, Indonesia.

Email: elisjul.chaiska01@gmail.com

Ivony Eunike Putri KOTE

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Simpson Ungaran,
Jawa Tengah 50516, Indonesia.

Email: ivonykote22@gmail.com

Olivia PANGKALI

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Simpson Ungaran,
Jawa Tengah 50516, Indonesia.

Email: oliviapangkali@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

There is a scarcity of literature available that examines the emergence of indigenous Christian ministry in post-independence Indonesia. As a result, the impact of Christian missions needs to be evaluated objectively and comprehensively. The Indonesian Bible Tent Church had chosen "Put out into the deep" as the theme for Mission Month in 2022. However, the subject was explored in local churches for four weeks, with many subthemes. According to preliminary research findings, some church members appeared to have difficulty grasping the theme. As a result, this study was carried out to determine the causes of the congregation's challenges in grasping the mission month topic at GKII Ungaran. For this qualitative study, the authors interviewed 22 youths at GKII Ungaran. Based on the study's preliminary findings, which showed that the designated youth age group had trouble understanding the mission month sermon, informants from this age range were chosen as the main data source. This study reveals that communication challenges among members of the GKII Ungaran congregation are

mostly due to cultural issues. This situation causes the respondent to receive an abstract explanation. Secondly, the language barrier made it challenging for the young to focus on understanding the sermon due to the preacher's language use, the youths' misconceptions, and their overt high regard for the sermon's theme. Thirdly, the personal factors of the listeners—bad health, a lack of concentration, and exhaustion are some factors. Lastly, the sermons are difficult to comprehend due to communication-impairing instrument features such as sound systems.

Keywords: Sermons; mission preaching; communicating the Bible; barriers to preaching; barriers to communication.

INTRODUCTION

Within each denomination of a church, there exist diverse forms of worship or activities that are implemented to facilitate the execution of planned programmes (Panjaitan & Lumingkewas, 2019). The GKII, or Indonesian Gospel Tent Church (Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia), is a denomination that offers diverse forms of worship and holds a significant place in church programmes across various denominations. GKII conducts a monthly mission service as a form of activity. The objective of this service is to rekindle the enthusiasm of the members of the congregation for spreading the teachings of Jesus Christ. Worship activities during Mission Month typically incorporate thematic elements that promote missionary endeavours. When selecting a monthly theme, it is imperative to exercise caution and avoid haphazard decision-making with regards to missions. The determination of the theme for the mission month service in the GKII denomination is made by the Central Governing Body. Subsequently, the aforementioned themes were passed on to individual local churches, subsequently serving as the focal point of discussion for the ensuing month. The customary practise of conducting mission-month worship typically spans from the commencement of August until the end of the month.

Prior to embarking on a church mission, commonly referred to as an act of mission, it is imperative that the congregation or individual believer possess a comprehensive understanding of the underlying concept of mission (Arifianto, 2020). Misinterpreting the definition of a mission may lead to an individual's inability to successfully execute the mission programme. The mission, commonly referred to by the congregation, involves spreading the gospel of Christ through evangelism (Sinambela, Sibuea, & Hutagalung, 2021). The congregation or believers ought to possess a fervent passion for preaching the gospel, in addition to comprehending the essence of the term "mission." Nevertheless, upon examining the available data, particularly within the GKII denomination, it is evident that evangelism activities have yet to reach their full potential. In this instance, upon reflection of the worship programme executed by GKII, specifically the mission month service, it is apparent that such an occurrence ought not to have transpired.

The issue of lack of participation in evangelism among the GKII congregation members, despite their engagement in worship activities during the missionary month, may be attributed to inadequate comprehension of the mission. The issue at hand requires pastoral intervention to facilitate increased engagement of church members in spreading the gospel. It is imperative to acknowledge that the significance of the theme in a religious service is often deemed inconsequential to the attainment of success in

spreading God's message across various aspects. The theme of worship plays a significant role, as it serves to evoke passion and appeal among the congregation who are attentive to the message (Selan, 2006). The inclusion of a compelling worship theme has the potential to indirectly inspire all individuals who are receptive to the message.

The act of preaching is a teaching method employed to convey God's word to congregation members. Noah et al. (2019), in their research, expounded that preaching is a viable approach to motivating church members to participate in the ministry movement. According to Objantoro et al.'s (2022) research, preaching has been identified as a method that effectively encourages the involvement of church members in various church-related activities. The research conducted by Objantoro et al. (2022) revealed that congregational members are able to cultivate a heightened sense of appearance through exposure to sermons. According to Marbun (2020), preaching is a viable approach for instructing the congregation and fostering their active participation in ministry.

The Central Governing Body has designated a theme for the 2022 mission month worship activities, which is "Turn to the Deep Place, Luke 5:4b". The current theme for this month's mission worship employs an analogy that can be considered stimulating to the brain in its comprehension. An analogy is an expression of language used to elucidate a concept by presenting it through a different explanation that shares the same meaning. The themes or topics presented during the Mission Month service can be considered distinctive. However, it is evident that comprehending and grasping this topic is not within the grasp of every individual. The lack of comprehension among many congregations regarding the designated theme of the mission month is likely to impede their evangelism activities.

Many researchers have conducted studies on the constraints encountered by the congregation. However, the barriers examined by many different researchers did not address the challenges encountered by the congregation in comprehending the worship theme of the mission month. Santoso (2020) conducted research on the congregation's comprehension of the pastor's sermon during Sunday services, revealing that it has a lack of understanding (39-132-1). According to Sunarto's (2017) research, a barrier to the congregation's comprehension and acceptance of God's word is the preacher's integrity (103-Article). Hutaauruk (2021) conducted a study on the connection between communication and the success of a sermon. The research conducted by the researcher is intriguing; however, the congregation's challenges in comprehending the mission month theme, particularly in 2022, are not addressed. As a result, the researcher makes an effort to examine in this research the challenges that the congregation has in order to ensure that the mission month topic for 2022 is not obscured.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current research employs a form of qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research methods are utilised to comprehend phenomena within a specific context. Thus, this approach was selected to comprehend the factors that contribute to the challenges encountered in comprehending the sermon delivered during the mission month at GKII Ungaran.

The informants for the research consisted of young people who were affiliated with the GKII Ungaran Congregation. The researcher conducted interviews with a sample size of 22 young people who participated in services throughout the designated

mission month. The selection of informants from the youth age group as the primary data source was based on the study's initial findings, which revealed that the identified youth age group encountered challenges in comprehending the mission month sermon. There are 50 young people in total at GKII Ungaran Data. With the use of the snowball sampling method, a sample of 22 young individuals was recruited. The demographic information of the informants in the current study is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

No	Characteristics	Frequency
1.	Age	
	18-24 years old	22 persons
2.	Gender	
	Male	8 persons
	Female	14 persons
3.	Place of Origin	
	NTT	7 persons
	Papua	1 person
	Sumatra	3 persons
	Kalimantan	10 persons
	Bali	1 person

Table 1: Demographic Information

The Miles and Huberman analysis approach (2019) was then used to analyse the interview data. In order to determine the statement's relevance to the research issue, these data are reduced. Information obtained from informants that is unrelated to barriers to comprehending the mission month sermon is disregarded and treated as secondary information. In the meantime, statements about barriers to comprehending the mission month sermons served as the major information. The researcher then displays the data and presents it in various themes as a result of data reduction. The outcomes of the informant interviews were then categorised into a number of themes, and their meanings were interpreted. The responses from various informants are presented by choosing the most pertinent answer. In order to find out whether regional origin was a determining factor in the barriers to comprehending GKII's mission month sermons in 2022, informants from various regional origins were chosen.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Information was discovered regarding the congregation's barriers to comprehending GKII's sermon for the 2022 mission month based on an analysis of the findings of interviews with 22 informants at GKII Ungaran. The following are barriers to comprehending the sermon for mission month:

Audiences' Cultural and Geographic Background

Based on the findings of the interviews, the researcher concluded that the congregation's difficulties in comprehending the GKII 2022 mission month sermon theme were caused by the congregation's and the audience's cultural background and place of origin. Several excerpts from the interview findings indicate this. Informants from the PRK claimed that because their hometown was far from the sea and rivers, they were unable to comprehend the habits of the fishermen. The informant, LW, continued by stating that he had trouble comprehending fishing operations because most of the people in his place of origin were farmers. The HG source further disclosed that his family was not a fishing one. HG also lives in a mountainous environment, making it difficult for him to comprehend the habits of the fishermen. HG clarified that it is challenging to apply the idea of fishing to everyday life as it is difficult to comprehend. In addition, the PM informant stated that the preacher during mission month did not provide illustrations of fishermen that are simple to comprehend in a variety of cultural contexts. Based on the findings of these interviews, it is recognised that a congregation's comprehension of a particular sermon theme would be significantly influenced by their cultural background. According to the findings of the interviews mentioned above, the cultural differences explain why some of the informants who had trouble understanding the sermon's theme were people who lived far from sea or river areas. As a result, the data indicates that the congregation's comprehension is limited since its culture differs from that of the sermon's text.

The results of the research indicate that cultural and geographical backgrounds play a role in comprehending a sermon's overall theme. Comprehending the sermon's intended purpose might be impeded by cultural differences between the audience members, the Bible text, and the speaker. Informants from remote regions that lack access to rivers or the sea frequently struggle to grasp the idea of fishermen. Informants who haven't seen fishermen at work frequently have no understanding of what a fisherman does as well.

Cultural differences between the audience and the messenger's culture may cause communication barriers (Pratiwi & Wisudawanto, 2015). Cultural perspective serves as a communication barrier, according to Harianto GP (2012). Preachers who are less aware of the cultural background of their audience may deliver the proper message, but it may be misunderstood or appear highly abstract to them (Hesselgrave, 2013). Some of the informants in this research received abstract information, which is what happened to them. Although quite a few individuals in the Indonesian context interact with the sea and rivers, fishing activities are not always present. The majority of respondents who encountered this barrier were those from eastern Indonesia's mountainous areas. They have no real comprehension of fishing. Other informants, however, did not mention how their environment and culture made it difficult for them to comprehend the sermon's message.

The preacher must take action to lessen the barriers brought on by cultural factors, including conducting cultural research. According to Kraft (2002), comprehension is created as a result of how communication functions within the context of the recipient of the message. Human culture was used in the writing of the Bible. The objective is for people to comprehend the message that God conveyed to the Bible writers (Piper, 2015). A preacher should pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance when composing a sermon in order to receive wisdom (Scharf, 2013). Additionally, the

preacher must be aware of the culture of the audience. In order to employ more effective illustrations, this barrier must be alleviated by thoroughly researching the audience's culture (Vagt, 2005). Theologically, it is necessary to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to overcome cultural barriers. Practically speaking, the preacher needs to research the communication style of the audience (Kraft, 2005; Padilla, 1979). As a result, in addition to using biblical multiplication, the preacher must also conduct research on the recipient of the message.

The Preacher's Language

Based on the findings of the interviews, the researcher concluded that the audience's difficulty comprehending the sermon's theme for the 2022 GKII mission month was a result of the preacher's use of language in relation to the congregation. Using N-Vivo 12 Plus to analyse the interview results, the word frequency query was discovered, as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Word Frequency Query for Sermon Constraints

According to the findings of the research depicted in Figure 1, it is clear that members of the church were unable to comprehend the sermon's theme during Mission Month because the language used was either too complex or difficult to comprehend. The fact that the preacher was from abroad and the audience was from Indonesia, as the

study discovered, contributed to the lack of understanding. The sermon on Sunday, August 14, 2022, was delivered in the form of a testimony by a foreigner and was translated into Indonesian, according to the researcher's observations. It appears that the gap between the preacher and the interpreter makes it challenging to follow the sermons' sequence. According to the interviews' findings, the language of the preacher was a major barrier to comprehending the sermon during the 2022 GKII Mission Month. Based on the research's findings, it can be assumed that the causes contributing to the lack of comprehension of the Mission Month sermon's theme were due to the use of sophisticated or incomprehensible terminology. Even if the sermons have been translated, informants from certain regional backgrounds frequently have trouble comprehending them.

According to Wright (2007), the role of the preacher is to identify barriers that prevent audiences from comprehending the biblical text. They must therefore be aware of the language aspects of communication. The results of the research indicate that language aspects impede communication. According to Mawikere and Hura (2022), language is an invaluable instrument for Bible communication. Therefore, a preacher needs to be aware of his or her audience's language proficiency. Understanding the language proficiency of the audience and pinpointing the precise language used in the sermon are two actions that can be taken to solve this issue. Creating sermon illustrations that reflect the culture of today's audiences is an action that can be taken. Jesus essentially demonstrates this when teaching the disciples. His teachings are clarified by making use of local culture (Karnawati et al., 2020). Communication requires the use of media that aid in the concretization of information. Digital media can be employed as a medium for teaching communication in the technological age (Darmawan et al., 2022). The media's role in communication is to reduce barriers to communication.

Incomprehensible language of the theme

According to the findings of the interviews, the congregation's difficulty in comprehending the sermon's theme for the 2022 GKII mission month was due to the theme's incomprehensible language. A number of excerpts from interviews with five informants make this clear. Each of the informants revealed that:

“The difficulty I had was that the sermon's content was unfamiliar to me, making it difficult for me to understand” (RA)

"The parable language of the theme is excessively sophisticated for me to understand the theme of the mission month" (KK)

"I'm having trouble grasping the mission month's theme because of the sophisticated language (S)

"The lack of a detailed explanation of the background of the figures is my barrier in comprehending the mission month" (NP)

“Since the speaker was delivering the speech very quickly and the terminology is not very clear, which makes it difficult for me to understand the theme of mission month” (KM)

Based on the findings of the aforementioned interviews, it is clear that one of the reasons people have difficulty comprehending the sermon's theme for Mission Month is because the parables intended to describe and explain foreign themes are heard. The

early youth category of young informants is where the theme of linguistic issues predominates. Young informants who were beginning to enter early adulthood, however, did not have many issues. This indicates that internal causes are to blame for the sermon's understanding during the 2022 GKII mission month. It appears that the internal factors of the sermon audience become obstacles in the communication process. Audiences who have poor vocabulary will likewise have limited understanding of the parables. The majority of the informants who reported having difficulty comprehending the theme language were those from rural and mountainous areas, according to the demographic information of the informants who responded to the question. Even though they reside in Ungaran, a small town in Semarang Regency, their surroundings have no direct impact on their language. This is based on the research team's participant observations.

The informants' connection with youth groups that are impacted by pop culture is another factor that makes it challenging to comprehend the theme language. It takes proper pop-culture terminology to preach stories from the Bible (Miller, 2005). Generations that have been profoundly influenced by pop culture make up the informants in this research. The theme's language is typically not difficult to comprehend, but for young people who are influenced by pop culture, it will be challenging to understand the theme's meaning. This factor appears to be linked in a way that makes it difficult to comprehend the sermon for the 2022 mission month.

Personal Circumstances

The congregation's difficulties in comprehending the sermon's theme for the 2022 GKII mission month were discovered by the researcher to be a result of the congregation members' personal circumstances as sermon listeners, according to the findings of the interviews. This is evident from the interview analysis outcomes, which were discovered by the word frequency query in Figure 2 of N-Vivo 12 Plus.



Figure 2. Word Frequency Requests for Personal Obstacles Listening to Sermons

The personal condition is one of the factors that is highly important in understanding the sermon delivered, according to the findings of these interviews. Informants appear to be drowsy and uninterested while they listen to sermons. Both internal and external factors might contribute to boredom and drowsiness. Sophisticated language use is an external factor that, when compared to other interview data, might contribute to drowsiness and boredom. According to the interview data, five informants were sick at the time of the sermon, which caused them to feel exhausted and unfocused. The personal circumstances affecting the audience are a crucial factor, as evidenced by the findings of the interviews, which indicate that certain congregation members might have difficulty comprehending due to ongoing personal struggles (personal problems). The results of the interviews indicated that the audience's lack of focus during the sermon was attributed to factors such as drowsiness and a sense of boredom with the sermon's atmosphere. Subsequently, a number of sources elucidated that during the sermon, they preferred using their mobile devices. Based on the findings of the interviews, it can be inferred that the congregation's comprehension of the sermon on the mission month theme was impeded by two factors, which are external and internal.

According to GP (2012), the delivery of a message may encounter barriers due to the uncooperative attitude of the message recipient. According to the findings of the research, a number of participants reported being drowsy and engaging with their mobile devices during the course of listening to sermons. This indicates that an unfavourable attitude has impeded the conveyance of the message and resulted in a lack of concentration during the delivery of the sermon. It is imperative to maintain a respectful attitude while listening to sermons, as the conveyed message is considered to be the divine word of God. According to Tozer's presentation (2018), an individual's perception of God significantly impacts their attitude towards Him. In line with Tozer's concept, it may be deduced that the attitude of not taking sermons seriously results from a lack of knowledge of God, who is the author of the word. The sermon involves a dual aspect of communication, comprising firstly the impact of a person's understanding of God on their receptiveness to the sermon and secondly the significant role played by the sermon in shaping the congregation's comprehension of God.

Apart from the factor of attitude, the emergence of drowsiness can be attributed to the psychological disorientation experienced by the audience members. Stott and Scharf (2013) state that individuals who fail to focus their attention on God's voice during sermons are prone to distraction and may find themselves contemplating unrelated matters. In contemporary times, individuals are situated within the realm of cyberspace, and their focus is primarily directed towards diverse stimuli present within this digital domain (Mbanaso & Dandaura, 2015; Sumaryanto & Adji, 2020; Tomatala, 2021). Given that this research focuses on young individuals who spend a significant amount of time in cyberspace, it appears that drowsiness may be attributed to a lack of engagement with traditional forms of communication and a heightened interest in the digital realm. The aforementioned assertion was substantiated through observational findings, which revealed that individuals who derived significant pleasure from gaming were among the informants who reported having drowsiness.

Current status of the utilised tools

The research conducted in 2022, which involved interviews with the GKII Ungaran congregation, revealed several factors contributing to a lack of understanding of the mission month theme. These included issues with the tools used and the inconsistent volume levels of the sound system.



Figure 3. Word Frequency Query for Audio

Based on the results of the interviews included in Figure 3's Word Frequency Query for Audio Analysis, it can be concluded that the condition of the instruments used also influences the congregation's comprehension of the mission month sermon theme. Congregations revealed that less stable audio conditions, such as frequent volume fluctuations, caused a loss of concentration while listening to sermons. Concentration is required in order to comprehend the sermon being delivered. The congregation's ability to comprehend the sermon will be impeded if the preacher's concentration is disrupted by faulty equipment. This factor is not the primary cause of the failure to comprehend the Mission Month sermon. This factor additionally indicates that instrument issues are a barrier to comprehending sermons.

CONCLUSION

The research's findings indicate that there are four primary factors that contribute to communication barriers in comprehending the 2022 GKII mission month sermon. First of all, cultural aspects Informants hailing from mountainous areas or remote locations devoid of beaches and rivers encounter challenges in providing an accurate depiction of individuals engaged in fishing activities. Individuals within the congregation who encounter challenges in articulating abstract information may encounter obstacles in internalising and comprehending the underlying message conveyed in the sermon. Hence, it is imperative to employ illustrations that are pertinent to the contemporary cultural milieu of the audience. Audio-visual media can be utilised by preachers to reduce the abstract nature of sermon content. Secondly, the linguistic factor The informants expressed high regard for the preacher's use of language and the thematic content of the sermon over a period of four weeks, with respect to language. This phenomenon poses a challenge in terms of maintaining concentration and comprehending the sermon.

The use of sophisticated language by the preacher, coupled with the background influence of the audience, presents challenges in comprehending the sermon delivered during the mission month. Thirdly, the individual circumstances of the audience, such as physical ailments, short concentration spans, and fatigue, can present personal challenges that impede comprehension of the sermon. This issue is also connected to our disposition towards receiving sermons. The fourth factor pertains to instruments, specifically sound systems, which can impede communication and lead to challenges in comprehending the sermon. The presence of unstable sound system conditions can lead to a disruption in focus, ultimately resulting in a decrease in the ability to concentrate and comprehend the sermon.

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