

GRATIFICATION PREVENTION IN THE ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION SPHERE: AN EXAMINATION OF COMMUNICATION POLICY AT THE STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY BASED ON QS AN- NISA [4]: 9-10

By: Zainal Arifin

zainalarifin@uinsu.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the persistent practice of giving (gratification) within one of the State Islamic Universities (UIN) in Indonesia, particularly in the student academic completion process. This phenomenon contradicts the efforts to establish a clean and integrity-based educational ecosystem, as highlighted by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK). This study aims to analyze Islamic communication policies in the prevention of gratification based on the inspiration of QS an-Nisa [4]: 9-10 and to evaluate the implementation practices of communication policies related to gratification prevention at the UIN. The research method employed is a qualitative study with a content analysis approach towards the Quranic verses and observations of field practices, through interviews as well as document analysis. The findings indicate that Islamic communication policies in preventing gratification are grounded in four main principles inspired by QS an-Nisa [4]: 9-10, namely honesty (*qaul sadid*), constructive criticism (*muhasabah nafsi*), awareness of accountability before Allah (*taqwa*), and abstaining from unlawful wealth. Meanwhile, the implementation practices of gratification prevention communication policies at the UIN remain minimal and not yet effective. Despite discussions and proposed circular letters, field implementation has not been optimal, citing the giver's sincerity as a reason.

Keywords: Communication Policy, Gratification Prevention, State Islamic University, QS an-Nisa [4]: 9-10, Islamic Education

INTRODUCTION

The background of this research is the discovery of the practice of giving (gratification) to lecturers or staff of study programs at one of the State Islamic Universities (UIN) in Indonesia. This giving is carried out by students from the undergraduate to doctoral levels (bachelor's to doctoral degrees), particularly related to the completion of their

undergraduate theses, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations. The forms of these gifts vary, ranging from drinks, food, and parcels to, at times, a sum of money. The most substantial giving from students to lecturers generally occurs during the doctoral dissertation completion process, from proposal seminars, result seminars, and closed seminars to promotion or open seminars.

The findings of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), published in a Tempo article on April 25, 2025, titled "KPK Reveals Integrity Violations in Schools and Campuses: Cheating, Gratification to Nepotism," reinforce the urgency of this research. The KPK revealed that in the aspect of gratification, as many as 30 percent of teachers and lecturers, and 18 percent of principals or rectors, still consider it normal to receive gifts from students or parents. In 60 percent of schools, the giving of parcels during holidays or grade promotion remains a common practice. More worryingly, in 22 percent of schools, teachers are suspected of receiving gifts with the intention that students obtain good grades or

In addition to gratification, the KPK also noted other irregularities in educational governance, including non-transparent procurement of goods and services, acceptance of commissions from vendors, mismanagement of School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds, nepotistic practices, budget inflation, illegal levies in new student admissions, as well as similar practices in the processing of certificates and other documents in schools and universities. The KPK assesses that these findings indicate the necessity of serious reforms in educational governance to realize a clean and integrity-based educational ecosystem.²

Considering the phenomenon of gratification occurring within the educational environment, including its potential occurrence at the UIN, this research focuses on two main questions: (1) How do Islamic communication policies address the prevention of gratification based on the inspiration of QS an-Nisa [4]: 9-10? (2) What are the current practices of communication policies at the UIN in preventing gratification?

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Research on gratification within the higher education environment has been extensively documented in scholarly literature, as seen in the articles by Gono Sutrisno³ and

¹ The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), in its report published in Tempo on April 25, 2025, titled "KPK Reveals Integrity Violations in Schools and Campuses: Cheating, Gratification to Nepotism."

² The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), in Tempo on April 25

³ Gono Sutrisno, "Fenomena Gratifikasi Dalam Konteks Perguruan Tinggi (Studi Kasus Pada Stie Bisma Lepisi, Universitas Banten Jaya, Serang)," pp. 51-59.

Tiara Rahma⁴. The aspect of gratification has also been examined from the perspective of the Quran, as in the articles by Budiono⁵ and Fajar⁶. Furthermore, it has been reviewed from an Islamic standpoint, as demonstrated in the articles by Fazzan⁷ and Suwardi⁸. Gratification has been widely studied within the context of criminal law, as exemplified by the article by Fazzan⁹. However, the identified research gap is the lack of an in-depth study on the communication of gratification prevention, particularly within the context of higher education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative analysis approach. Data were collected through interviews with several informants comprising officials, staff, and students at the relevant higher education institution. The identities of the university and the informants have been kept confidential in accordance with research ethics.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Etymologically, according to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language), gratification is a giving provided due to a service or benefit obtained.¹⁰ Within the context of this research, it refers to the provision in the form of money, goods, facilities, or other forms received by state administrators or civil servants who are suspected of having a conflict of interest and acting contrary to statutory regulations.

The term "gratification" in this context translates to "gratification" or can be understood as "illegal gratification" or "undue gratification" when referring to the prohibited act. The definition of gratification, particularly in the legal context of anti-corruption, as a form of giving in money, goods, facilities, or other forms received by state administrators or civil servants with an alleged conflict of interest and contrary to the prevailing laws and

⁴ Tiara Rahma Dini, "Perspektif Mahasiswa UNNES Mengenai Tindakan Gratifikasi di Lingkungan Kampus," *Jurnal Mediasi* Vol. 4, No. 2 (February 2025): pp. 019-026.

⁵ Arif Budiono, Suap Dalam Al-Qur'an Dan Relevansinya Dengan Gratifikasi Di Indonesia (Kajian Tafsir Tematik), *MIYAH: Jurnal Studi Islam*, Vol. 17, No 01 (January 2021): pp. 121-149.

⁶ Muhammad Fajar, "Examining the Concept of Gratification in the Qur'an: Gone Theory Analysis of Bribery, Gifts, and Official Integrity," pp. 1-10.

⁷ Fazzan, "Gratification in the Perspective of Positive Law in Indonesia and the Solution According to Islam," *Jurnal Syariah*, Jil. 24, Bil. 2 (2016): pp. 179-206.

⁸ Ahmad Suardi Ritonga, "Faktor Penyebab Tindak Pidana Gratifikasi Yang Dilakukan Kepala Daerah Menurut Hukum Islam dan Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2001," *Al-Zayn: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial & Hukum*, Volume 2, Nomor 1 (June 2024): pp. 81-100.

⁹ Fazzan, "Gratification In The Perspective Of The Positive Law In Indonesia," *Ar-Raniry: International Journal of Islamic Studies* Vol. 2, No. 1 (June 2015): pp. 173-190.

¹⁰ Tim KBBI, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kemendikbud, 2023).

regulations, is elaborated in the Law Number 20 of 2001¹¹ concerning the Amendment to Law Number 31 of 1999¹² concerning the Eradication of Corruption Crimes (UU Tipikor). Interpretations and applications of this law by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and court decisions further clarify the scope of "other forms" of gratification.

The definitive boundary for recipients of prohibited gratification explicitly includes those categorized as state administrators or civil servants, in accordance with the definitions within the Corruption Eradication Law (UU Tipikor). A more complex question arises regarding honorary staff who are not salaried by the state but by their superiors. Are they permitted to receive such provisions? This definition includes honorary staff because typically, such personnel or drivers often receive money intended for their superiors.

Regarding honorary staff who are not paid by the state but receive their salary from their superiors, the situation is more intricate. Based on the definition of civil servants in the UU Tipikor, particularly in Article 1 paragraph 2 letters c and e, it can be interpreted that individuals receiving salaries or wages from state or regional finances, or receiving allowances or other payments from state or regional finances, fall under the category of civil servants.

If the honorary staff in question do not receive salaries or wages directly from state or regional finances but entirely from their superior's personal budget, then formally, based on that definition, they may not be directly included in the category of "civil servants" regulated by the UU Tipikor. However, it is important to consider several aspects: (1) Potential Broadening of Meaning; (2) The Role of Honorary Staff as an Extension of Authority; and (3) Article 12 letter b of the UU Tipikor. This article prohibits civil servants or state administrators from receiving gifts or promises when it is known or reasonably suspected that the gift or promise is given to induce them to do or not do something in their position that is contrary to their obligations. If honorary staff receive something with the aim of influencing their superiors to act or refrain from acting, then their superiors could be subject to this article.

Therefore, within these defined terms, honorary staff paid by their superiors can be assessed as recipients of gratification by considering the substance of the provision and its connection to the position or authority of state administrators or civil servants. Ethics and the

¹¹ <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/44900/uu-no-20-tahun-2001>

¹² <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/45350/uu-no-31-tahun-1999>

principle of prudence must still be upheld, even for honorary staff, especially if their duties intersect with the potential for conflicts of interest.

DISCUSSION

﴿وَلْيَخْشَ الَّذِينَ لَوْ تَرَكَوْا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعَفًا خَافُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْيَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ۖ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتَامَىٰ ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا وَسَيَصْلَوْنَ سَعِيرًا﴾

9. And let those (executors and guardians) have the same fear in their minds as they would have for their own, if they had left behind them weak offspring and feared for them. So let them fear Allah and speak right words (in dealing with orphans). 10. Verily, those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, they eat up only a fire into their bellies, and they will be burnt in the blazing² Fire! (QS an-Nisa [4]: 9-10)

Although this verse specifically, based on previous studies by scholars such as ar-Razi,¹³ at-Tabari,¹⁴ at-Tabathabai,¹⁵ and al-Maturidi,¹⁶ discusses the prohibition of unjustly consuming the wealth of orphans, the researcher argues that the principles contained therein have universal implications, including in the context of gratification prevention in the world of education. Gratification concealed behind seemingly "sincere" giving can be considered an improper taking of rights if the giving occurs due to a power dynamic and can influence the objectivity of service or assessment.

Based on the interpretation of QS an-Nisa [4]: 9-10 and referring to the concept of Islamic communication policy previously developed, this research identifies four main principles of Islamic communication policy in the prevention of gratification within the educational environment.

Furthermore, the researcher examines QS an-Nisa [4]: 9-10 in relation to Islamic communication policy for the prevention of gratification in the world of education. This Islamic communication policy is based on what the researcher has written in the book *Pengantar Komunikasi Islam: Perspektif Tafsir Alquran* (Introduction to Islamic Communication: Quranic Interpretation Perspective) on pages 53-56. Of course, this policy

¹³ Fakhruddin ar-Razi, Mafatih al-Ghaib (Beirut, Libanon: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1420 H), vol. 5, p. 78.

¹⁴ Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir at-Tabari, Jami' al-Bayan fi Ta'wil al-Qur'an (Cairo, Egypt: Dar Hijr, 1422 H), vol. 4, p. 274.

¹⁵ Muhammad Husain at-Tabathabai, Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an (Beirut, Libanon: Mu'assasah al-A'lam li al-Mathbu'at, 1997), vol. 4, p. 176.

¹⁶ Abu Mansur Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Maturidi, Ta'wilat Ahl al-Sunnah (Beirut, Libanon: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2005), vol. 3, p. 31.

has undergone changes and adjustments to the context of gratification in the educational world, with four core essences remaining the same.

The subject of *Qaul sadid* (right word) is the teacher, while the object is the student themselves. *Qaul sadid* is more focused in the world of education. Educating students needs to be done by conveying truthful words. *Sadid* originates from the word *sadad*, which means to demolish something and then repair it. This word can also be interpreted as *istiqamah* (steadfastness), consistent, on target, and correct. *Sadida* can be interpreted as constructive criticism or educational information.¹⁷

An anomaly occurs and is truly dangerous when the world of education, which should be an example of honesty, turns out to be a bad example of the prohibited crime in practice. To further clarify how Islamic communication policy should address the prevention of gratification in the world of education, the following is an explanation of the verse that can be further examined.

1. Honesty in Educating (*Qaul Sadid*)

This principle emphasizes the importance of honesty and truthfulness in all aspects of education. Educators are expected to convey information as it is, without concealing facts or making false promises. The honesty of educators is the primary capital in building trust and preventing the practice of gratification that can undermine the integrity of education.

Qaul sadid is related to the world of education, where honesty and truthfulness or presenting things as they are is necessary. It involves stating that life has its ups and downs, like waves in the sea. Honesty in educating means informing about the complete condition as it is, without unnecessary embellishments that can be misleading or lull into complacency.¹⁸ Education needs to teach simplicity and independence, even though the educational world can actually be made luxurious and appear prosperous. However, education with luxury is not good because it is very easy for humans to enjoy the ladder of success, while it is very difficult for them to descend into the abyss of failure. Learning about the strength of failure, the strength of simplicity, and the strength of patience are important parts of navigating real life.

Islamic communication policy built on the foundation of honesty or truthful *qaul sadid* is the main policy in combating gratification. Have teachers and lecturers, staff, and

¹⁷ Zainal Arifin, p. 53.

¹⁸ Zainal Arifin, p. 54.

leaders in the world of education been honest with themselves before speaking in front of their students? Let the world of education not be corrupted because educators are only good at words, but their behavior is contradictory. For this reason, the first Islamic communication policy, namely honesty, is the capital policy in Islamic history. The prophets were honest educators. Prophet Muhammad, with his noble character, held the primary title of *al-amin* or the trustworthy/honest one.

It is very unfortunate what the KPK stated in the introduction above if the world of education is not honest because students are more likely to emulate actions rather than words.

2. Constructive Criticism (Muhasabah Nafsi)

Qaul sadid can also be interpreted as constructive criticism, both that conveyed to students for improvement and as self-introspection for educators. In the context of gratification prevention, educators need to conduct critical self-evaluation regarding potential conflicts of interest and the impact of accepting gifts. The KPK's report on gratification in the educational world serves as constructive criticism that should encourage introspection for all elements of education.

As mentioned above, *qaul sadid* can also be referred to as constructive criticism. This criticism must be conveyed so that the younger generation becomes strong and resilient in facing life. Students' mistakes need to be corrected, their incorrect writings need to be amended and revised, so that they become a generation ready to face the future. Educators willingly teach the meaning of apologizing and forgiving if errors occur.¹⁹

The KPK's report on gratification in Indonesian education is constructive criticism, not only addressed to students to be resilient in navigating this uncertain life, but this statement from the KPK is also a critique for the world of education itself. Everyone needs to introspect and reflect. If the world of education, as a role model, sets a bad example, how can it provide good education to the nation's children?

The second understanding of *qaul sadid* by the researcher in establishing good education is to speak to oneself for *muhasabah nafsi* or self-introspection. The foundation of education lies in educators and academic personnel engaging in intrapersonal reflection to assess their worthiness as educators, stating it with full critical awareness (*qaul sadid*) so that behavioral change occurs from within the educators themselves.

¹⁹ Zainal Arifin, p. 54.

3. Closeness to Allah and Remoteness from Hell (Taqwa)

Verse 9 emphasizes the importance of being conscious of accountability before Allah (*taqwa*). Education must be able to instil the understanding that true success is achieving Allah's pleasure and Paradise, while ultimate failure is incurring Allah's wrath and Hell. The fear of Allah will drive educators to avoid all forms of prohibited actions, including accepting gratification that can eliminate blessings and bring about sin.²⁰

Khashyah (fear with reverence) at the beginning of the verse, followed by *khauf* (fear) and *taqwa* (piety/consciousness of Allah) towards Allah, are the keywords of Islamic communication policy in the prevention of gratification, which must begin with the educators themselves. Does he/she fear Allah and Hell? If not, then education loses its meaning. Students may become intelligent but lack morals because morality originates from the fear of Allah and the hope for His pleasure, culminating in Paradise and avoidance of Hell. Without *taqwa*, morality disappears. Educators may do good and appear moral, but the essence of it all might be reciprocation: I am good if he/she is good; I am not good because he/she does not give and is not good to me.

It is different if someone has *taqwa* and fears Allah. He/she will act with sincerity and purity of intention. In his/her mind, there is only Allah, and he/she acts in His name. The Prophet advised: "O young man, guard Allah, and Allah will guard you. Guard Allah, and you will find Him on your side. If you ask, ask Allah. If you seek help, seek help from Allah."

This is the Islamic communication policy implemented by Prophet Muhammad towards his students. The *qaul sadid* practiced by the Prophet began with himself. When pursued and facing an assassination attempt during the Hijrah (migration), the Prophet said to Abu Bakar: "Do not fear and do not grieve; surely Allah is with us." This is a very wise Islamic communication that pierced the heart of the educator (Prophet Muhammad) and was conveyed to his student, in this case, Abu Bakar.

4. Abstaining from Unlawful Wealth

Verse 10 explicitly prohibits consuming the wealth of orphans unjustly. This principle can be broadly interpreted as a prohibition against acquiring sustenance through unlawful means, including the practice of gratification. Unlawful wealth is believed to eliminate blessings and bring about torment in the afterlife. Therefore, Islamic communication policy in

²⁰ Zainal Arifin, p. 55.

the prevention of gratification must also emphasize the importance of abstaining from all forms of wealth acquired improperly.

All sustenance (lawful and unlawful) comes from Allah. If Allah provides unlawful sustenance, why would He forbid humans from taking it? The answer is that every human being has been predestined by Allah with lawful and good sustenance, but human greed and haste lead them to take what is unlawful and forbidden. The second reason is to believe that Allah has determined the sustenance of every individual to be lawful, and what is needed next is how to obtain it in a lawful manner.²¹

Unlawful sustenance does not increase sustenance itself, only sin. Allah has measured the sustenance of every human being at 100%. If they take 50% unlawfully, then only 50% remains lawful. This means that sustenance obtained unlawfully does not increase except in sin and the loss of blessings.²²

Abstaining from unlawful wealth is a *qaul sadid* that is worthy of being spoken and applied by anyone who desires goodness for anyone else, whether parents who desire goodness for their children or colleagues who remind each other.

This verse concludes by affirming that unlawful wealth eliminates blessings. Unlawful wealth is never satisfying, like a fire that devours everything. In the afterlife, the consequence of consuming unlawful wealth is confinement in Hell.

Based on the theoretical foundation of Islamic communication policy derived from verses 9 and 10 of Surah An-Nisa, four important points regarding this policy are identified: first, honesty; second, constructive criticism; third, closeness to Allah; and fourth, abstaining from unlawful wealth. *Qaul sadid*, as explained above, is related to the world of education and is first and foremost practiced by educators and educational institutions. Although some scholars also argue that this statement is universal, applicable to and by anyone. Why is *qaul sadid* closely related to the world of education? Because speaking truthfully is the essence of education, even though success in life also requires honesty. However, it all begins with education.

Here, it is also evident how the ethics of Islamic communication cannot be separated from the other four principles (divinity, humanity, knowledge, and moderation). The principle of divinity is found in closeness to Allah. Meanwhile, abstaining from unlawful

²¹ Zainal Arifin, pp. 56.

²² Muhammad Mutawalli asy-Sya'rawi, *Tafsir asy-Sya'rawi* (Cairo, Egypt: Mathabi' Akhbar al-Yaum, 2000), v. 4, pp 1996. See also Muhammad Mutawalli asy-Sya'rawi, *Tilk Hiya aa-Arzaq* (Cairo, Egypt: Dar an-Nadwah, 2000), pp. 41.

wealth is certainly very humane. No one wants to be stolen from, so do not steal. To avoid being trapped in the pit of gratification, Islamic communication policy invites all elements of society, especially those involved in the world of education, to understand gratification and all related prohibitions. Moreover, the prohibitions of the state and religion regarding gratification are part of a very moderate policy: what you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.

PRACTICES OF COMMUNICATION POLICY AT UIN

This research observes and analyzes the practices of communication policy related to the prevention of gratification within the environment of the State Islamic University (UIN). As the Head of the Doctoral Study Program, the researcher holds a unique position to observe and analyze these practices directly, with reference to four relevant theoretical frameworks. This study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of gratification prevention efforts at UIN, identify the challenges faced, and offer recommendations for improvement.

First, the Policy to Speak Honestly

Discussions regarding gratification have commenced at UIN, recorded in the leadership meeting of Study Program Heads at the beginning of the current rector's tenure. However, this initial communication has not yet resulted in a clear and structured policy regarding the prevention and handling of gratification. The researcher took the initiative by proposing the issuance of an official circular letter prohibiting the practice of gratification within the campus environment. The draft circular letter, which was prepared and sent to the leadership on August 7, 2024, highlighted the following key points:²³

1. Prohibition of Receiving and Giving Gratification. This circular letter explicitly prohibits all UIN employees from receiving gratification in any form, whether in the form of cash or other financial instruments (checks, deposits, vouchers, etc.), goods, facilities, or other forms of giving that have economic value. This prohibition also applies to stakeholders, partners, and users of UIN services.
2. Rejection of Gratification. UIN employees are instructed to reject all forms of gratification requests related to their positions or authority and that are contrary to their obligations and duties. This includes various forms of giving, including money, goods, and facilities.

²³ Internal researcher data based on records of sending the draft circular letter to UIN leaders.

3. Prohibition of Making Promises. This circular letter also prohibits the making of promises of funds, donations, gifts, or other designations, whether verbally or in writing, to UIN employees. This action is considered an abuse of authority that has the potential to lead to acts of corruption.
4. Reporting Mechanism. To ensure the effectiveness of supervision, this circular letter establishes a clear reporting mechanism. Any request or offer of gratification related to the position or authority of UIN employees must be reported through the channels provided, namely the official email (laporupguin...@uin...ac.id), WhatsApp number (08520000...), or the Garda Online (GOL) online application integrated with the official website of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) (gol.kpk.go.id). Reports must be submitted no later than 10 (ten) working days from the occurrence of the gratification.²⁴

The researcher actively followed up on this proposal through direct communication with university leaders. In messages sent via WhatsApp, the researcher emphasized the importance of issuing the circular letter, especially concerning the practice of giving by doctoral students to examiners and supervisors, which clearly falls under the category of prohibited gratification in service according to statutory regulations. The researcher also attached the draft circular letter in PDF and Word formats to facilitate the leadership in the process of issuance and socialization.²⁵

Furthermore, the researcher informed the leadership that the Doctoral Study Program had begun to implement the draft circular letter internally. Consequently, there is no longer the provision of food, drinks, or transportation money for examiners (both internal and external) and examination committees. The researcher emphasized that this policy aims to create a campus environment free from the practice of gratification.²⁶

Although the university leadership gave a positive response and stated that the circular letter was in the process of being issued, the researcher's observations indicate that the practice of gratification continues to this day. In interviews, some leaders argued that

²⁴ Email addresses and WhatsApp numbers have been disguised to protect privacy. The address of the Garda Online (GOL) online application is public information accessible through the official website of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK).

²⁵ Internal researcher data based on documentation of conversations via WhatsApp application with university leaders.

²⁶ Internal researcher data based on the implementation of internal policies in the Doctoral Study Program of Islamic Communication and Guidance.

these gifts are a form of students' sincerity as a token of gratitude to lecturers who have provided beneficial knowledge.²⁷

Based on the researcher's observations, the direct management of these gifts is carried out by staff paid by superiors, not honorary or permanent staff paid by the state. This staff coordinates food, drinks, and fruits, and directly distributes hundreds of thousands of rupiah in cash to the examiners, chair, and secretary of the examination.

However, this condition creates a recurring dilemma within the higher education environment. The policy of speaking honestly becomes increasingly difficult due to the absence of a clear circular letter or internal guidelines from any party (ministry, university, or faculty) regarding the limits of acceptable gifts. Gifts that originate from staff and end up with leaders and examiners – is this lawful sustenance? This causes confusion in distinguishing whether a gift falls into the category of prohibited gratification or is merely lawful sustenance. This situation highlights the importance of regulatory clarity to prevent the practice of gratification.

The researcher compared this situation with experiences at other universities where the researcher pursued higher education, namely Al-Azhar University (Egypt), Umm Durman University (Sudan), and the Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya (APIUM) (Malaysia). At these universities, the researcher noted that campus services generally ran well and professionally without the practice of gratification from students to lecturers. The relationship between lecturers and students was based on the transfer of knowledge and collaboration in research and education projects.²⁸

In short, despite the positive response from the leadership and the statement that the circular letter is being processed, the reality is that the circular letter has not been issued up to the writing of this research, and the practice of gratification continues. The leadership's justification, citing students' "sincerity," indicates a challenge in changing long-established perceptions and practices.

Second, Self-Introspection

UIN, like many other government institutions, aspires to realize clean governance free from corruption, including in financial management. Efforts towards self-introspection are continuously undertaken and implemented. These steps are crucial given several past legal

²⁷ Researcher's interview notes with several university leaders during the research period.

²⁸ Researcher's personal experience during higher education at Al-Azhar University (Egypt), Umm Durman University (Sudan), and the Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya (APIUM) (Malaysia).

cases related to financial management involving UIN leaders, high-ranking officials, and staff. These cases involved allegations of significant fund irregularities, and some perpetrators from the academic community are still serving sentences for these actions.²⁹

In this context, *muhasabah nafsi* (self-introspection) is not merely a moral aspiration but also part of a systematic effort supported by the state. Various training and capacity-building programs are organized to equip financial policy managers with the knowledge and skills needed to prevent acts of corruption and gratification. The leadership's communication policy in encouraging self-introspection is often manifested in public and internal statements. For example, statements such as, "We do not want to repeat the same mistakes. We are striving to achieve goodness," reflect a commitment to learn from past experiences and improve. The vice-rector, in a reflective note on the last rector's two-year leadership period, also emphasized the importance of prudence in every action and decision: "we must be solid and must always work together to realize the dream of a better UIN."³⁰

Nevertheless, the researcher's observations indicate that while there is a spirit of self-introspection and efforts for improvement in terms of general financial management, the handling of gratification has not shown the same level of firmness. The practice of gratification continues. This indicates a gap between the stated commitment and the implementation of policies in the field.³¹

Third, the Policy of Fear of Allah

The researcher observed that messages about the dangers of gratification linked to the fear of Allah are rarely found in Friday sermons at the UIN mosque.³² This indicates that the issue of gratification may not yet be a primary concern in the religious discourse within the campus environment, or it may even be considered normal or tolerable by some educators and academic staff, especially if the giving occurs after the assessment process is complete.

Field observations show that UIN students generally provide food, cakes, fruits, and drinks during every final examination, including the thesis/dissertation defense. The cost for this provision is usually shared by the students who will take the exam. In addition, the researcher also observed the practice of giving money after the final defense, especially for

²⁹ Following Conviction, Former UINSU Rector Again Embroiled in BLU Fund Corruption Case.

³⁰ Prof. Dr. Azhari Akmal Tarigan, "Presenting Excellence and Developing Potential (Notes on 2 Years of Leadership of Prof. Dr. Nurhayati, MA)," WASPADA, May 8, 2025.

³¹ Researcher's observations during the research period and interviews with various parties within the UIN environment.

³² Researcher's observations on the implementation of Friday sermons at the UIN mosque during 2025.

master's (S2) and doctoral (S3) programs. This giving is often considered a form of gratitude for the guidance and examination provided by the lecturers.³³

During data collection in the field, in-depth discussions arose regarding the interpretation of giving from students, especially within the framework of *taqwa* (fear of Allah). There were views questioning whether this giving could be categorized as *risywah* (bribery) or 'consuming wealth unjustly' which is prohibited in Islam, thus requiring the perpetrators to have *taqwa* and stop the practice.³⁴

On the other hand, some staff members viewed this giving as commonplace, not of significant value (hundreds of thousands, not millions), without coercion or fixed amounts, and given based on willingness. They argued that this practice is still within the corridor of reasonableness and remains within the limits of *taqwa*. Internally, within the framework of *muhasabah an-nafsi*, UIN believes that this giving does not yet fall into the category of violations. The self-protection measures taken are considered still in line with religious and state regulations.³⁵

The above is reinforced by discussions with leaders regarding this practice of gratification, which often concludes with justification based on the "sincerity" of the giver, namely the students.³⁶ However, interviews with several doctoral students revealed complaints regarding the high unofficial costs they have to incur to complete their studies. These costs include various things, from fees for obtaining administrative documents from academic staff to transportation costs, cakes, and food for the examining lecturers.³⁷ These complaints raise serious questions about the actual "sincerity" of these gifts. Are these gifts truly based on a sincere desire to express gratitude, or is there an element of coercion or expectation of special treatment?

Fourth, Abstaining from Unlawful Wealth

UIN collaborates with the Inspectorate General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in the form of consultation and assistance related to strengthening

³³ Researcher's observations on the practice of providing consumption and giving money in final examinations of UIN students.

³⁴ Notes from in-depth discussions between the researcher and various parties (lecturers, staff, and students) regarding the interpretation of student giving in the context of Islamic teachings.

³⁵ Statements from several UIN staff members based on the researcher's interview notes during field data collection.

³⁶ Conclusions regarding UIN's internal beliefs about the practice of giving are based on the researcher's discussion notes with university leaders.

³⁷ Complaints from doctoral students regarding unofficial fees are based on the researcher's interview transcripts during field data collection.

the Internal Supervisory Unit (SPI), as well as the management and use of state funds.³⁸ This collaboration is part of ongoing efforts to realize clean and accountable governance. The researcher's observations indicate a strong commitment from UIN to prevent irregularities in the management of state finances.³⁹

The bitter experience of past legal cases involving UIN leaders, especially those related to financial management, has provided valuable lessons for the current and future leadership. Awareness of the importance of transparency, accountability, and integrity in financial management is increasing.⁴⁰

In short, UIN has made significant improvements in corruption prevention efforts, driven by the bitter experiences of the past. However, the handling of gratification is still in the process of moving in the right direction. The fundamental question that continues to be the subject of discussion at the level of campus and faculty leaders is: Are these gifts, parcels, and envelopes considered prohibited gratification, or are they merely sincere gifts or expressions of gratitude? If these gifts fall into the category of prohibited gratification, then abstaining from them is an obligation not only regulated by the state but also by religion. However, if these gifts are considered sincere expressions of gratitude, then they do not fall into the category of unlawful wealth but rather lawful sustenance. This difference in interpretation is one of the challenges in formulating effective and comprehensive policies related to the prevention of gratification at UIN

ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION POLICY PRACTICES AT UIN

Based on the presented data, the following is an analysis of the communication policy practices related to the prevention of gratification at UIN:

First, the Policy to Speak Honestly

It can be seen from five analyses: (1) Gap between Discourse and Action: Although discussions regarding gratification have begun, a clear and structured policy has not yet been issued. This indicates a gap between discourse (talk) and concrete action in the form of formal policy. (2) Ad-Hoc Initiatives: The researcher's initiative to draft and propose a

³⁸ UINSU and the Inspectorate General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Sign Commitment to Strengthening SPI Capabilities | SPI Must Be Strong! – UIN North Sumatra Medan.

³⁹ Researcher's observations on UIN's commitment to preventing irregularities in the management of state finances during the research period.

⁴⁰ Reflections on UIN's past legal experiences are based on the researcher's analysis of public information and internal discussions.

circular letter indicates a need for clearer policies. However, this initiative is ad-hoc and has not yet become part of a sustainable institutional policy.

(3) Lack of Firmness in Leadership Communication: The leadership's response stating that the circular letter is "being processed" demonstrates a lack of firm communication and a lack of urgency in addressing the issue of gratification. (4) Justifications Contradicting Regulations: Justifying the practice of gratification based on "sincerity" contradicts statutory regulations that prohibit gratification in any form. This indicates a problem in the understanding and internalization of regulations among the leadership. (5) Comparison with Practices at Other Universities: Comparisons with universities abroad highlight differences in ethical standards and academic practices. This suggests that UIN needs to learn from best practices at other institutions.

Second, Self-Introspection

The Analysis of Communication Policy Practices at UIN related to self-introspection can be seen from three analyses: (1) Awareness of Past Problems: UIN demonstrates awareness of past corruption problems and strives for self-introspection. This is evident in the statements of the leadership and efforts to improve the capacity of financial managers. (2) Focus on Corruption, Less on Gratification: Self-introspection efforts are more focused on large corruption cases related to financial management, while the handling of gratification has not shown the same level of firmness. This indicates a different prioritization of issues. (3) Implementation Gap: There is a gap between the leadership's commitment to realizing clean governance and the implementation of policies in the field related to the prevention of gratification. This indicates challenges in changing long-established behaviours and practices.

Third, the Policy of Fear of Allah

The Analysis of Communication Policy Practices at UIN related to the policy of fear of Allah can be seen from three analyses: (1) Lack of Emphasis on Religious Aspects: Messages about the dangers of gratification linked to the fear of Allah are rarely found in religious discourse within the campus environment. This indicates a lack of emphasis on religious aspects in gratification prevention efforts. (2) Rationalization of Gratification Practices: The practice of giving by students is often rationalized as a form of "gratitude," which indicates a justification or normalization of practices that are prohibited. (3) Questions about Sincerity: Complaints from students regarding unofficial fees they must pay raise

serious questions about the "sincerity" of these gifts. This indicates the potential for abuse of authority and disguised extortion.

Fourth, Abstaining from Unlawful Wealth

The Analysis of Communication Policy Practices at UIN related to the policy of abstaining from unlawful wealth can be seen from three analyses: (1) Cooperation with the Inspectorate General: Cooperation with the Inspectorate General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia demonstrates efforts to improve accountability and prevent irregularities in the management of state finances. (2) Focus on Legal Aspects: Corruption prevention efforts are more focused on legal aspects and compliance with regulations, while ethical and moral aspects (such as "abstaining from unlawful wealth") are less emphasized. (3) Differences in Interpretation: Differences in interpretation regarding whether a gift constitutes gratification or a legitimate gift pose a challenge in formulating effective policies. This indicates the need for more intensive socialization and education regarding the definition and boundaries of gratification.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Overall, the analysis indicates that UIN has made efforts to prevent corruption, but the handling of gratification still faces various challenges. These challenges include: (1) Lack of clear and structured policies. (2) Gap between discourse and action. (3) Lack of firmness in leadership communication. (4) Justifications for gratification practices that contradict regulations. (5) Lack of emphasis on religious and moral aspects. (6) Differences in interpretation regarding the definition and boundaries of gratification.

To overcome these challenges, UIN needs to take more comprehensive and integrated steps, including: (1) Issuing clear and firm policies regarding the prevention and handling of gratification. (2) Increasing socialization and education about gratification to the entire academic community. (3) Consistently enforcing regulations and imposing strict sanctions for violations. (4) Fostering a strong culture of integrity and ethics within the campus environment. (5) Involving students and the community in efforts to monitor and prevent gratification.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of Islamic communication policy theory from QS an-Nisa [4]: 9-10, it can be concluded that the prevention of gratification in the Islamic perspective is based on the principles of honesty, constructive self-criticism, awareness of accountability to Allah, and abstaining from all forms of unlawful wealth. This verse, although specifically discussing the unjust consumption of orphans' wealth, has universal implications for all forms of improper taking of rights, including gratification in the context of educational services.

Meanwhile, the conclusion from the analysis of field practices regarding communication policy at UIN is that gratification prevention efforts are not yet optimal. Although there is awareness of this issue at the leadership level, there has been no effective and structured implementation of communication policies. The justification of gratification based on "sincerity" indicates a lack of deep understanding of the negative impacts of this practice and the absence of a strong anti-gratification culture within the campus environment.

NOVELTY

The significant novelty of this article is the use of an Islamic theological-communication perspective, specifically the interpretation of QS an-Nisa [4]: 9-10, as a theoretical foundation for formulating communication policies for the prevention of gratification in the Islamic higher education environment. This research offers a new approach by integrating Islamic values in efforts to build clean and integrity-based educational governance, going beyond the legal or administrative approaches generally used in discussing gratification. The article also provides a specific case study of practices at UIN, thus providing an empirical overview of the challenges and opportunities in implementing anti-gratification policies in the context of Islamic higher education in Indonesia.

REFERENCES

- Al-Maturidi, Abu Mansur Muhammad bin Muhammad. 2005. *Ta'wilat Ahl al-Sunnah*. Vol. 3. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.
- Arifin, Zainal. 2022. *Pengantar Komunikasi Islam: Perspektif Tafsir Alquran* [Introduction to Islamic Communication: Quranic Interpretation Perspective]. Medan, Indonesia: Duta Azhar.
- ar-Razi, Fakhruddin. [1420 AH]. *Mafatih al-Ghaib* [The Keys to the Unseen]. Vol. 5. Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi.

- Asy-Sya'rawi, Muhammad Mutawalli. 2000. *Tafsir asy-Sya'rawi* [The Interpretation of asy-Sya'rawi]. Cairo, Egypt: Mathabi' Akhbar al-Yaum.
- _____, *Tilk Hiya aa-Arzaq* (Cairo, Egypt: Dar an-Nadwah, 2000).
- At-Tabari, Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir. [1422 AH]. *Jami' al-Bayan fi Ta'wil al-Qur'an* [The Comprehensive Explanation in the Interpretation of the Qur'an]. Vol. 4. Cairo, Egypt: Dar Hijr.
- At-Tabathabai, Muhammad Husain. 1997. *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* [The Scale in the Interpretation of the Qur'an]. Vol. 4. Beirut, Lebanon: Mu'assasah al-A'lami li al-Mathbu'at.
- Budiono, Arif. 2021. "Suap Dalam Al-Qur'an Dan Relevansinya Dengan Gratifikasi Di Indonesia (Kajian Tafsir Tematik)" [Bribery in the Qur'an and its Relevance to Gratification in Indonesia (A Thematic Interpretation Study)]. *MIYAH: Jurnal Studi Islam* [MIYAH: Journal of Islamic Studies], 17, no. 01 (January).
- Fajar, Muhammad. [n.d.]. "Examining the Concept of Gratification in the Qur'an: Gone Theory Analysis of Bribery, Gifts, and Official Integrity."
- Fazzan. 2015. "Gratification In The Perspective Of The Positive Law In Indonesia." *Ar-Raniry: International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2, no. 1 (June).
- _____. 2016. "Gratification in the Perspective of Positive Law in Indonesia and the Solution According to Islam." *Jurnal Syariah* [Journal of Islamic Law], 24, no. 2.
- KBBI, Tim [KBBI Team]. 2023. *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* [Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language]. Jakarta, Indonesia: Kemendikbud [Ministry of Education and Culture].
- Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi (KPK) [Corruption Eradication Commission]. 2025. "KPK Ungkap Pelanggaran Integritas di Sekolah dan Kampus: Menyontek, Gratifikasi hingga Nepotisme" [KPK Reveals Integrity Violations in Schools and Campuses: Cheating, Gratification to Nepotism]. *Tempo*, April 25, 2025.
- Republik Indonesia [Republic of Indonesia]. 1999. *Undang-Undang Nomor 31 Tahun 1999 tentang Pemberantasan Tindak Pidana Korupsi* [Law Number 31 of 1999 concerning the Eradication of Corruption Crimes]. Accessed from <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/45350/uu-no-31-tahun-1999>.
- Republik Indonesia [Republic of Indonesia]. 2001. *Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2001 tentang Perubahan Atas Undang-Undang Nomor 31 Tahun 1999 tentang Pemberantasan Tindak Pidana Korupsi* [Law Number 20 of 2001 concerning

Amendments to Law Number 31 of 1999 concerning the Eradication of Corruption Crimes]. Accessed from <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/44900/uu-no-20-tahun-2001>.

- Ritonga, Ahmad Suardi. 2024. "Faktor Penyebab Tindak Pidana Gratifikasi Yang Dilakukan Kepala Daerah Menurut Hukum Islam dan Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2001" [Factors Causing Gratification Crimes Committed by Regional Heads According to Islamic Law and Law Number 20 of 2001]. *Al-Zayn: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial & Hukum* [Al-Zayn: Journal of Social Science & Law], 2, no. 1 (June).
- Sutrisno, Gono. [n.d.]. "Fenomena Gratifikasi Dalam Konteks Perguruan Tinggi (Studi Kasus Pada Stie Bisma Lepisi, Universitas Banten Jaya, Serang)" [The Phenomenon of Gratification in the Context of Higher Education (Case Study at Stie Bisma Lepisi, Universitas Banten Jaya, Serang)].
- Tarigan, Prof. Dr. Azhari Akmal. 2025. "Menghadirkan Keunggulan dan Mengembangkan Potensi (Catatan 2 Tahun Kepemimpinan Prof. Dr. Nurhayati, MA)" [Presenting Excellence and Developing Potential (Notes on 2 Years of Leadership of Prof. Dr. Nurhayati, MA)]. *WASPADA*, May 8, 2025.
- Tiara Rahma Dini. 2025. "Perspektif Mahasiswa UNNES Mengenai Tindakan Gratifikasi di Lingkungan Kampus" [UNNES Students' Perspectives on Gratification Actions in the Campus Environment]. *Jurnal Mediasi* [Journal of Mediation], 4, no. 2 (February).
- UIN Sumatera Utara Medan [State Islamic University of North Sumatra, Medan]. 2024. "UINSU dan Itjen Kemenag Tandatangani Komitmen Penguatan Kapabilitas SPI | SPI Harus Kuat! – UIN Sumatera Utara Medan" [UINSU and the Inspectorate General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Sign Commitment to Strengthening SPI Capabilities | SPI Must Be Strong! – UIN North Sumatra Medan]. Accessed from <http://repository.uinsu.ac.id/view/divisions/EJOU/>.