

The Impact of the Policy for Forming Religious Moderation Villages on Creating Peaceful Conditions in Southeast Sulawesi

Dampak Kebijakan Pembentukan Kampung Moderasi Beragama terhadap Penciptaan Kondisi Damai di Sulawesi Tenggara

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of the Religious Moderation Village (KMB) policy in Southeast Sulawesi Province as a response to digital disruption that threatens credible religious authority and trigger identity polarization. Amidst the contestation of digital spaces dominated by exclusive narratives and provocative hoaxes, the role of Islamic Religious Counselors is crucial as information mediators and agents of moderation. The main focus of this study is to evaluate the impact of the KMB policy in creating peaceful conditions and how the transmission of moderation values is carried out in digital and non-digital contexts. The research methodology used is descriptive qualitative with a policy study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with Islamic Religious Counselors and community leaders in the KMB area, participant observation of counseling activities, and content analysis on social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok) to measure the effectiveness of counter-narratives against extremist ideologies. The analytical framework uses Heidi Campbell's Religious-Social Shaping of Technology theory to dissect the shift in religious authority in the digital era. The research findings show that the establishment of the KMB in Southeast Sulawesi significantly strengthened social capital and the resilience of rural communities to asymmetric information. Religious instructors play a strategic role in enhancing the community's digital literacy to filter out misleading "buffet of religious narratives." This study recommends strengthening digital literacy for instructors to enable them to seize the digital stage through inclusive and tolerant narratives. Integrating Southeast Sulawesi's local wisdom with digital transformation is key to successfully creating a moderate, stable, and harmonious religious ecosystem at the grassroots level.

Kata Kunci:

Moderasi Beragama;

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji implementasi kebijakan pembentukan Kampung Moderasi Beragama (KMB) di Provinsi Sulawesi Tenggara sebagai respons terhadap disrupsi digital yang mengancam otoritas

Kampung
Moderasi
Beragama;
Penyuluh
Agama;
Transformasi
Digital.

keagamaan kredibel dan memicu polarisasi identitas. Di tengah kontestasi ruang digital yang didominasi narasi eksklusif dan hoaks provokatif, peran Penyuluh Agama Islam menjadi krusial sebagai mediator informasi sekaligus agen moderasi. Fokus utama kajian ini adalah mengevaluasi dampak kebijakan KMB dalam menciptakan kondisi damai serta bagaimana transmisi nilai moderasi dilakukan dalam konteks digital dan non-digital. Metodologi penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan pendekatan studi kebijakan (*policy research*). Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan Penyuluh Agama Islam dan tokoh masyarakat di wilayah KMB, observasi partisipatif terhadap aktivitas penyuluhan, serta analisis konten pada saluran media sosial (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, dan TikTok) guna mengukur efektivitas kontra-narasi terhadap paham ekstrem. Kerangka analisis menggunakan teori *Religious-Social Shaping of Technology* dari Heidi Campbell untuk membedah pergeseran otoritas keagamaan di era digital. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembentukan KMB di Sulawesi Tenggara secara signifikan mampu memperkuat modal sosial dan ketahanan masyarakat perdesaan terhadap informasi asimetris. Penyuluh agama berperan strategis dalam meningkatkan inteligensi digital masyarakat guna menyaring "prasmanan narasi keagamaan" yang menyesatkan. Kajian ini merekomendasikan perlunya penguatan literasi digital bagi penyuluh agar mampu merebut panggung digital melalui narasi inklusif-toleran. Integrasi antara kearifan lokal Sulawesi Tenggara dan transformasi digital menjadi kunci keberhasilan dalam menciptakan ekosistem keagamaan yang moderat, stabil, dan harmonis di tingkat akar rumput.

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, through the Directorate General of Islamic Community Guidance, declared 2019 the "Year of Religious Moderation." Religious moderation has become a slogan and a guiding principle in every program and policy implemented by the Ministry. In every activity undertaken, this institution strives to position itself as a mediator (moderation) amidst the diversity and pressures of disruption that impact aspects of religious and national life.

Religious moderation, in this context, is intended to guide society toward a moderate understanding, not to be extreme in religious practices, and not to deify reason, which fosters unlimited freethinking. Religious moderation is discussed, recited, embodied, and echoed as a framework for managing the lives of multicultural Indonesians. The need for a moderate religious narrative is not only a personal or institutional need, but also a general need for global citizens, especially amidst the development of information technology in the face of global capitalism and the accelerated politics of the so-called digital era.

In a digital space controlled by electronic speed, human existence undergoes a fundamental shift, from a body moving through space to a body stationary, capable only

of absorbing information passing through electronic simulations. Digital space then becomes an arena for contestation and competition.

At this point, digital spaces are exploited by certain groups to foster conflict and foster identity politics. Digital spaces are now increasingly dominated by religious values that tend toward exclusivity. Furthermore, religious teachings are in conflict with state policies. This situation is highly concerning, as it could shift religious authority and foster a rejuvenation of the Ulama (Islamic scholars). Indeed, religious authority is no longer held by authoritative and credible Ulama.

This article is an actualization of the implementation of the 7 (seven) Priority Program concepts of the Minister of Religious Affairs. The seven priority programs of the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs are (1) Strengthening Religious Moderation, (2) Digital Transformation, (3) Year of Religious Tolerance, (4) Revitalization of the KUA, (5) Religiosity Index, (6) Independence of Islamic Boarding Schools, and (7) Cyber Islamic University. This article will raise the issue of the Establishment of Religious Moderation Villages which were launched simultaneously throughout Indonesia by the Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs on July 26, 2023. The Launching of the Establishment of Religious Moderation Villages (KMB) is one of the mandatory programs of the Minister of Religious Affairs, namely strengthening religious moderation. In addition, in order to realize the performance of professional religious instructors, it is hoped that this article will look at the other side of religious instructors in the digital and non-digital contexts as an actualization of the implementation of the Minister of Religious Affairs program through digital transformation. This policy paper will reveal the role of religious instructors in social media channels and actual public contestation. Religious educators are expected to correct misleading public narratives, particularly hoax news with unclear sources that appear provocative.

The Minister of Religious Affairs' policy of establishing Religious Moderation Villages is urgent because, as a heterogeneous nation, Indonesia upholds the value of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). The diversity of ethnicities, races, cultures, languages, and religions constitutes a richness and a reflection of Indonesia's pluralism. This diversity is an important Indonesian identity that must be preserved by all Indonesians. There are at least three challenges that must be faced. First, the growth of excessive (extreme) religious views, attitudes, and practices that disregard human dignity. Second, the growth of subjective claims of truth and the imposition of one's will on religious interpretations, as well as the influence of economic and political interests, has the potential to trigger conflict. Third, the growth of religious fervor that is inconsistent with national love within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

This is a matter of common concern and must be addressed together, so that religious communities do not distance themselves from their religions. Efforts to address these challenges include fostering an optimistic attitude to maintain stability and harmony in Indonesia's socio-religious life. This can be achieved by maintaining the distinctive character of the Indonesian people, which is polite, tolerant, and respectful of differences. This spirit of togetherness in maintaining harmony among Indonesian citizens is carried out through a spirit of socio-religious moderation.

Religious moderation is crucial as social capital, having been legally established as a supporting factor for national development in Presidential Decree No. 18 of 2020 concerning the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). Therefore, religious moderation is a necessity that must be implemented by all members of society.

Based on Decree of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance No. 137 of 2023 concerning Guidelines for the Establishment of Religious Moderation Villages (KMB) in 2023, the establishment of Religious Moderation Villages is intended to foster a community paradigm regarding religious moderation awareness, implemented within the district/city work units of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Therefore, a dedicated agency, specifically Islamic Religious Counselors, is needed to provide continual support to the community in Religious Moderation Villages.

Based on the above considerations, the government policy, specifically the Ministry of Religious Affairs, through the establishment of Religious Moderation Villages, is crucial to ensure the understanding and practice of Religious Moderation across all levels of society. This is also intended through the presence of religious instructors in the community to counter misleading hoax news, especially those that can trigger extremist religious understandings. The presence of skewed information obtained through the media, which dominates community life, can trigger divisions, especially in rural areas where filtering is very limited. Relying solely on one-sided information, in this case information obtained through social media, whether YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or TikTok, is crucial.

In the Religious-Social Shaping of Technology theory introduced by Heidi Campbell in her book, "When Religion Meets New Media" (2010), it is explained that the impact of the digital era on people's religious practices includes, among other things, the fading of affiliation with religious institutions, the shifting of religious authority, the strengthening of individualism, and the shift from pluralism to tribalism.

Meanwhile, religious narratives and studies are competitive arenas with great potential for being produced by certain groups to disseminate religious ideas, concepts, and symbols to the public. Religious studies have become a fertile ground that is easily manipulated and narrated according to purely subjective desires. This situation recognizes that religious communities today are limited to symbols and far from substantial values.

Ironically, the movements of hard-line groups, which display religious narratives aggressively and emotionally, are actually gaining sympathy among some Muslims. This sympathy is derived from the digital space, where its dissemination is so massive and easy. This is especially true in an election year, when religious sentiment is often exploited to sow hatred among fellow citizens through digital media. Media has become a new commodity for spreading certain religious ideologies and interests, both as a form of resistance to religious organizations that do not share common understanding and as a form of defense for one's own group. Amid this worrying phenomenon, the Ministry of Religious Affairs recognizes the need for an inclusive and tolerant approach to religion to seize the digital stage by strengthening religious moderation within society. The Ministry of Religious Affairs is committed to making Religious Moderation part of the foundation for thinking, acting, and formulating policies and programs across all Ministry stakeholders.

This paper examines how the transformation and transmission of religious moderation are channeled in the digital and non-digital realms, as a contestation space for the acquisition of a moderate and tolerant religious narrative. Furthermore, this paper seeks to understand digital intelligence, which refers to the intelligence in utilizing information, media, and technology to maintain religious moderation when faced with a "buffet of religious narratives." As is widely known, numerous digital illiteracy issues plague religious communities, which then make it easier for individuals to spread false news that can threaten national integrity. Conversely, there are also digital experts who use their intelligence to spread false news.

Therefore, Islamic religious instructors, as agents of religious moderation, must be able to counteract news on social media so that the public is not trapped by narratives constructed on the social stage through social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. As the author of this policy paper, I am very interested in writing about the Review of the Role of Islamic Religious Instructors in Mediating Information about Religious Moderation in a Digital and Non-Digital Context with a concentration on the Impact of the Implementation of the Policy for the Establishment of Religious Moderation Villages (KMB) on Creating Peaceful Conditions in Southeast Sulawesi.

Identification of the Problem

1. Disruption of Religious Authority in the Digital Space: The emergence of a shift in religious authority, where people tend to rely on massive but unreliable digital content, thus displacing the role of authoritative and competent religious figures.
2. Dominance of Exclusive Narratives and Identity Politics: Digital spaces (Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, etc.) are often exploited by certain groups to spread rigid, exclusive, and provocative religious views, which have the potential to trigger social conflict and threaten national integration.
3. Low Digital Intelligence in Rural Communities: The limited digital literacy skills of people in rural/village areas make them vulnerable to being trapped in a "buffet of narratives" of hoaxes and misleading news without adequate filtering.
4. The Gap in the Role of Religious Instructors between Digital and Non-Digital Contexts: There is a significant challenge for Islamic Religious Instructors in balancing conventional (face-to-face) outreach duties with the need to be agile "counter-narrators" on social media to seize the digital stage from radical groups.
5. Threats to Social Cohesion in Southeast Sulawesi: Ethnic and religious heterogeneity in Southeast Sulawesi faces a real threat in the form of "digital tribalism" and subjective claims of truth, which could undermine the stability and harmony of religious life if moderation programs are not implemented substantively.
6. Optimizing the Institutional Structure of Religious Moderation Villages (KMB). A clear mechanism is needed so that KMBs are not merely symbolic and ceremonial, but rather become a platform for transforming community paradigms, continuously supported by competent moderation agents (facilitators).

Formulation of the Problem

The research questions in this policy paper are:

1. What is the impact of the Religious Moderation Village (KMB) Establishment Policy on Creating Peaceful Conditions in Southeast Sulawesi?
2. What is the role of Islamic Religious Counselors in contributing to the success of the Religious Moderation Village Establishment, especially in mediating information in digital and non-digital contexts?

Objectives and Benefits of the Study

Study Objectives

1. Describe the data and information on the impact of the Religious Moderation Village (KMB) Establishment Policy on Creating Peaceful Conditions in Southeast Sulawesi.
2. Describe the data and information on the role of Islamic Religious Counselors in the successful establishment of Religious Moderation Villages, especially in mediating information in digital and non-digital contexts.

Benefits of the Study

The benefits of this policy paper include theoretical benefits, practical benefits, and regulatory benefits:

1. Theoretical Benefits, it is hoped that in the policy paper *The Impact of the Formation of Religious Moderation Villages (KMB) on the Creation of Peaceful Conditions in Southeast Sulawesi (Review of the Role of Islamic Religious Counselors in Digital and Non-Digital Contexts)* will find the development of concepts or theories about the creation of peaceful conditions where This research is an effort to develop thinking into a new dimension of social phenomena in society, which will serve the service sector with special reference to the Higher Education sector and develop religious dimensions. In addition, this research tries to explore the main challenges that arise in the community environment both in the education sector and the socio-economic sector of the community;
2. Practical Benefits, it is hoped that this policy paper can be useful for improving the socio-economic conditions of the community in Southeast Sulawesi and become a reference in strategic planning and in implementing activities, for all levels of leadership and related stakeholders;
3. Benefits of Regulation, it is hoped that this research will become reference material for researchers or continue development research on the *Impact of the Formation of Religious Moderation Villages (KMB) on the Creation of Peaceful Conditions in Southeast Sulawesi (Review of the Role of Islamic Religious Instructors in Digital)* by taking different themes and thematic substances.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework integrates digital communication theory, the sociology of religion, and public policy to examine the phenomenon of Religious Moderation Villages (KMB).

1. Theory of Religious-Social Shaping of Technology (Heidi Campbell): This theory serves as the primary foundation for understanding how digital technology (social media) is transforming religious practices. It focuses on four main impacts: the fading of affiliation with religious institutions, the shift of religious authority to non-authoritative figures, the strengthening of individualism, and the rise of tribalism (exclusive groups).
2. Theory of Religious Moderation (Wasathiyah): Uses the middle path paradigm as a framework for managing diversity. In Indonesia, this theory is broken down into

four indicators: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodating local culture (local wisdom).

3. Digital Literacy/Intelligence Theory: This theory is used to analyze the ability of communities (particularly in rural areas) to access, filter, and evaluate religious information to avoid the trap of hoaxes and extreme narratives.
4. Role Theory: Used to analyze the strategic function of Islamic Religious Instructors not only as lecturers (traditional), but also as information mediators, digital educators, and instruments of peace at the grassroots level.

Conceptual Framework

The Concept of Religious Moderation

The word "moderation" comes from the Latin word "moderatio," meaning moderation (neither excessive nor deficient). In the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), moderation has two meanings: reducing violence and avoiding extremes. In English, the word "moderation" is often used to mean "average," "core," "standard," or "non-aligned." Among the words mentioned, "moderation" means prioritizing balance in moral beliefs and character, both when treating others individually and dealing with state institutions. In Arabic, moderation is known as "wasath" or "wasathiyah," which are equivalent to "tawassuth" (middle), "i'tidal" (fair), and "tawazun" (balanced). The antonym of "wasath" is "tatharruf" (excessive), which in English is referred to as "extreme," "radical," and "excessive."

Wasathiyah, or religious moderation, is the essence and substance of religious teachings, which are completely non-excessive, both in perspective and behavior. The principle of religious moderation (wasathiyah) is an attitude and perspective imbued with the values of balance and justice. This concept implies that a person in religion should not be extreme in their views, but rather should always seek common ground.

Thus, religious moderation can be understood as a perspective, attitude, and behavior that straddles the middle ground without going too far in religion, that is, without going to extremes. By "moderation," here, we mean placing one's understanding at a high level of wisdom, taking into account religious texts, the state constitution, local wisdom, and collective consensus. When religious moderation is upheld and implemented in every aspect of life, it will at least reduce prejudice that then gives rise to conflict and disagreement.

In the book "Religious Moderation," written by the Research and Development Team of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, it is explained that moderation is not only taught by Islam but also by other religions. In principle, the just and balanced attitude inherent in the principle of religious moderation can shape a person's three main characteristics: wisdom, purity, and courage. In other words, a moderate attitude in religion, always choosing the middle path, will be easier to achieve if a person possesses sufficient religious knowledge to act wisely, resist temptation so they can be sincere and unburdened, and is not selfish in their own interpretation of truth so they have the courage to acknowledge others' interpretations of truth.

Religious moderation, in this context, is the first step to fostering tolerance and unity between one group and another, between one religious adherent and another, and between one community and another. This means that rejecting extremism and liberalism is a wise middle path for creating harmony. Religious moderation is treating

others with respect by accepting differences as a characteristic of diversity. Religious moderation is essentially an implementation of the values of tolerance (tasamuh).

Furthermore, the concept of religious moderation strongly upholds egalitarian values (musawah) and does not discriminate against others. Differences in beliefs, traditions, religions, languages, ethnicities, or between groups should not be the source of arbitrary violence that could destroy bonds of brotherhood. In this context, religious moderation can be understood as a middle path to creating a peaceful and harmonious life, especially in this multicultural country.

Strengthening Religious Moderation

Religious moderation finds its relevance in being solidified on a universal philosophical foundation within the framework of scientific development in society. This is crucial not only as an effective means of fostering public sensitivity to differences but also as a strategy for strengthening moderate intellectualism so as not to easily condemn differing opinions.

The Director General of Islamic Community Guidance at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Kamaruddin Amin, has consistently emphasized on numerous occasions that religious moderation serves as a counter-narrative to the exclusive understandings developed by certain groups. Therefore, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' circular regarding the establishment of the "Moderation House," which is expected to become a driving force for the religious moderation movement, conveying a peaceful and tolerant message of religion, is highly relevant as a platform to counter the narrative of rigid religious understanding.

In this context, the digital space through social media has become a laboratory for cultivating moderate values. Throughout its development, it was established as a desire to create an inclusive, academic, sociological, historical, and philosophical model of Islamic study and understanding based on textual studies and social analysis that views religion as a societal reality. As a result, discourse on Islamic studies in various social contexts has been colored by academic nuances. Consequently, discourse on religious narratives in Indonesia largely emerges from the academic world of Islamic Religious Universities. This inclusive and critical intellectualism is a powerful force in strengthening a tolerant academic tradition, including in the digital space.

This can all be realized if all components of society adopt a moderate attitude, both in real life and online. Houses of religious moderation, corners of religious moderation in the public realm of cyberspace, serve as a forum for speaking up and committing to religious moderation through studies, research, publications, and community outreach.

Several books on religious moderation outline several strategic steps for strengthening religious moderation.

First, mainstreaming religious moderation is implemented and realized through the development of critical studies and respect for other groups and opinions. In this context, the inclusion of ideological subjects in the curriculum must be consistently promoted as a basis for strengthening. Ideological subjects can be seen, for example, in Pancasila and Civic Education. Specifically, Islamic Religious Higher Education can implement policies and institutionalize civic values within the educational culture.

Second, make the digital space a platform and place for cultivating humanitarian values, religious harmony, and religious moderation. This issue is particularly pressing as

Islamic education once again faces serious challenges stemming from the proliferation of sectarian and transnational Islamic constructs.

Third, develop religious literacy and interfaith education. In enhancing this religious literacy, the community plays a significant role in promoting religious moderation through the digital space. In today's fast-paced and pragmatic era, public understanding of the widespread religious narratives tends to be biased and counterproductive. Some are overly textual in their understanding of holy verses, accompanied by excessive fanaticism, leading to exclusivism, extremism, and even terrorism. Others go beyond boundaries and overly interpret holy books. Still others twist God's messages into personal messages fraught with personal interests. The logical consequence is the vulnerability to conflicts of interest that can tear apart the harmony of religious life.

In this context, religious moderation is imperative, which must be made viral, disseminated, socialized, and recited in digital spaces for practical implementation in everyday life.

Religious Moderation Villages

According to Decree No. 137 of 2023 from the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance concerning Guidelines for the Establishment of Religious Moderation Villages (KMB) in 2023, "Religious Moderation Villages" refers to villages or sub-districts whose communities embrace moderate religious perspectives, attitudes, and practices, contributing to the success of national development.

The background to the issuance of Decree No. 137 of 2023 from the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance concerning Guidelines for the Establishment of Religious Moderation Villages in 2023-2024 is that Indonesia upholds the value of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). The diversity of ethnicities, races, cultures, languages, and religions constitutes a richness and a reflection of Indonesia's pluralism. This diversity is an important Indonesian identity that must be preserved by all Indonesians.

There are at least three challenges that must be faced. First, the development of excessive (extreme) religious views, attitudes, and practices that disregard human dignity. Second, the growth of subjective truth claims and the imposition of will on religious interpretations, as well as the influence of economic and political interests, have the potential to trigger conflict. Third, the growth of religious fervor that is inconsistent with national love within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

This is a matter of common concern and must be addressed together, so that religious communities do not distance themselves from their religion. Efforts to address these challenges include fostering an optimistic attitude to maintain stability and harmony in socio-religious life in Indonesia. This can be done by maintaining the distinctive character of the Indonesian nation of politeness, tolerance, and mutual respect for differences. This spirit of togetherness in maintaining harmony among fellow citizens of Indonesia is carried out through a spirit of socio-religious moderation.

Religious moderation is crucial as social capital, which has been legally established as a supporting factor for national development in Presidential Regulation Number 18 of 2020 concerning the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). Thus, Religious Moderation is a necessity that must be implemented by all members of society.

Islamic Religious Counselors, as the vanguard of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, play a role in increasing faith and devotion to God Almighty, as well as a spirit of harmonious

and tolerant social and religious life for all levels of society. The smallest government structure is where various social life and dynamics begin. It is hoped that this area can become a region capable of maintaining and developing Religious Moderation in society and can resolve and mediate existing problems, whether religious, customary, cultural, or other social issues, amicably in accordance with prevailing societal norms without resorting to Indonesian positive law.

Based on the above considerations, the establishment of Religious Moderation Villages is crucial to ensure the understanding and practice of Religious Moderation across all levels of society.

It is stated in the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance Number 137 of 2023 concerning Guidelines for the Establishment of Religious Moderation Villages in 2023 that the Establishment of Religious Moderation Villages is intended as an effort to build a community paradigm regarding religious moderation awareness which is implemented based on the environment in the Regency/City Ministry of Religion Work Unit area.

The Concept of Religious Counselors

Religious counselors are a profession that plays a crucial role in the efforts to preach and spread Islam. In addition to their primary duties as religious counselors, they also play numerous important roles within the religious sphere.

The term "religious counselor" began to be popularized in 1985, with the issuance of Minister of Religious Affairs Decree No. 791 of 1985 concerning honorariums for religious counselors. Religious counselors are civil servants with full duties, responsibilities, authority, and rights to conduct Islamic guidance and counseling activities (Neti Sulistiani, 2013). Based on this decree, religious counselors are guides to religious communities in the context of developing mental, moral, and devotion to Allah SWT. Religious counselors are illuminators, lamps in the darkness, providing enlightenment and teaching wisdom to the surrounding community (Bimas Magazine, 2018).

The term "counseling" is closely related to "guidance" and "counseling," which is a term from the discipline of psychology. Counseling, specifically, is the process of providing assistance to individuals or groups using psychological methods to help them overcome their problems, whether preventive, corrective, or developmental (Moh. Rosyid, 2014).

Religious counseling can also be defined as an effort to provide mental, spiritual, and psychological assistance to individuals or groups experiencing physical and mental difficulties in their lives. This is done using religious methods or approaches, namely by awakening the power of inner vibrations (faith) within the client to overcome the problems they face (Mubarak, 2001).

The role of a religious counselor is a functional position within the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Religious counselors are the spearhead of the government in conveying religious and state messages. Religious counseling activities in Indonesia have a very strategic function because Indonesia is a "religious country," although not a "religious state." This aligns with the first principle of Pancasila, "Belief in the One and Only God." Therefore, religion receives serious attention to create peace and tranquility and to avoid problems arising from misunderstandings of religious teachings, internal and interfaith conflicts.

To foster motivation and take actions to build awareness and moderation, religious instructors are expected to function as:

1. Innovative and Educative: Religious instructors position themselves as missionaries obligated to propagate their religious teachings, convey religious information, and educate the community in the best possible manner according to religious teachings.
2. Consultative Function: Religious instructors volunteer to contribute to the solution of problems faced by the community, both individually, within families, and as a whole.
3. Innovative and Educative: Religious instructors volunteer to contribute to the solution of problems faced by the community, both individually, within families, and as a whole.
4. Consultative Function: Religious instructors volunteer to contribute to the solution of problems faced by the community, both individually, within families, and as a whole.
5. Administrative Function: Religious extension workers are tasked with planning, reporting, and evaluating the implementation of extension and guidance programs (Sara, 2020).

To optimally carry out their function as a religious extension worker, an extension worker must possess the following potential or abilities:

1. The ability to identify and monitor issues important to the community.
2. Awareness, commitment, and empathy for various cultures, assumptions, norms, beliefs, and values of multiculturalism or cultural diversity.
3. The ability to plan, design, implement, evaluate, calculate, and market extension programs.
4. The ability to recognize, understand, and facilitate opportunities and resources needed to best respond to community needs.
5. Mastery of both oral and written communication skills.
6. Effective interaction with individuals and groups.
7. Understanding the history, philosophy, and characteristics of extension (organizational knowledge).
8. The ability to establish structures, organize processes, develop, and monitor resources, and lead change to achieve extension results effectively and efficiently.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research Approach and Type

This research uses a qualitative approach with a policy research approach. This approach was chosen to evaluate the implementation of the KMB policy in depth and analyze the effectiveness of the role of Religious Instructors in mediating information in digital and non-digital spaces.

2. Research Location and Subjects

- Location: Southeast Sulawesi Province, focusing on villages/sub-districts designated as Religious Moderation Villages (KMB).

- Subjects (Informants): Islamic Religious Instructors (civil servants and non-civil servants), Heads of the Religious Affairs Office (KUA), community/religious leaders in KMB, and target communities exposed to moderated content.
3. Data Sources
- Primary Data: Obtained through in-depth interviews with religious instructors and observations of counter-narrative strategies on social media (Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube).
 - Secondary Data: Decree of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance No. 137 of 2023, statistical data on the KMB in Southeast Sulawesi, documents on the Ministry of Religious Affairs' priority programs, and literature related to digital literacy.
4. Data Collection Techniques
- Semi-structured Interviews: Exploring the strategies of religious instructors in countering hoaxes and disseminating moderated content.
 - Digital Content Analysis (Netnography): Examining narratives, sentiments, and public responses to religious moderation content produced by instructors on social media.
 - Documentation Study: Reviewing performance reports of instructors and regulations establishing the KMB.
5. Data Analysis Techniques
- Using the Miles and Huberman model of qualitative data analysis:
 - Data Reduction: Sorting relevant information regarding the role of instructors and the impact of the KMB policy.
 - Data Presentation (Data Display): Organizing findings in a matrix or descriptive narrative regarding the effectiveness of information mediation.
 - Conclusion Drawing/Verification: Providing data-based arguments regarding the KMB's contribution to harmony in Southeast Sulawesi.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Results and Discussion

Impact of the Policy on the Establishment of Religious Moderation Villages

As explained above, the establishment of Religious Moderation Villages is a necessity. Religious Moderation Villages is a term for villages or sub-districts whose communities embrace moderate religious perspectives, attitudes, and practices, in order to contribute to the success of national development. This government policy, through the Directorate General of Islamic Community Guidance at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, cannot be implemented as expected without the involvement of specific stakeholders. Islamic religious instructors are the most appropriate instrument to be the primary pioneers in ensuring the success of this KMB program.

Thirty-four sub-districts and villages have been designated as Religious Moderation Villages across 17 regencies/cities, as detailed below.

No	Regency Name	Location of the Religious Moderation Village (KMB)	
		Subdistrict	Village/Sub-district
1	Konawe Kepulauan	Wawonii Tengah	Desa Mekar Sari
		Wawonii Timur	Desa Tangkombuno
2	Kolaka Timur	Tirawuta	Desa Tasahea
		Ladongi	Desa Putemata
3	Konawe	Tonga Una	Sendang Mulya Sari
		Wonggeduku	Desa Puudaria
4	Buton	Lasalimu Selatan	Desa Ambuau Indah
		Kapontori	Desa Bukit Asri
5	Kolaka	Baula	Desa Puuroda
		Pomalaa	Desa Tonggoni
6	Muna Barat	Tiworo Tengah	Desa Suka Damai
		Maginti	Desa Abadi Jaya
7	Muna	Kabangka	Wakobalu Agung
		Lasalepa	Desa Bangunsari
8	Buton Tengah	Gu	Desa Lakapera
		Lakudo	Desa Lolibu
9	Bombana	Lantari Jaya	Desa Lambakasi
		Rarowatu Utara	Desa Marga Jaya
10	Kolaka Utara	Porehu	Desa Bangsala
		Porehu	Desa Porehu
11	Konawe Selatan	Landono	Desa Morini Mulya
		Mowila	Desa Lalosingi
12	Kota Kendari	Wua-wua	Kelurahan Wua-wua
		Baruga	Kelurahan Baruga
13	Kota Baubau	Bungi	Ngkaring ngkaring
		Wolio	Kel. Wangkanapi
14	Wakatobi	Wangi-wangi	Desa Waginopo
		Wangi-wangi Selatan	Kel. Liya Bahari Indah
15	Konawe Utara	Wiwirano	Desa Wacumelewe
		Langgikima	Desa Pariama
16	Buton Utara	Kulisusu	Desa Triwacu-wacu
		Kulisusu Barat	Desa Dampala Jaya
17	Buton Selatan	Batauga	Desa Lawela Selatan
		Sampolawa	Desa Bahari

Given the numerous Religious Moderation Villages launched by the Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs on July 26, 2023, the role of Islamic religious instructors is highly anticipated. Religious instructors, faced with diversity, have a strategic role in maintaining and optimizing tolerance between religious communities. They are expected to be facilitators of change and experts in resolving conflicts, as well as consulting with relevant parties to improve community harmony. Islamic religious instructors consistently guide, protect, and mobilize the community to do good. The role of religious instructors is crucial for several reasons:

1. Development requires the participation of all members of society, and religious communities need to be motivated to play an active role in ensuring the success of development.
2. Religious communities are a fundamental asset for development. Therefore, they must be utilized as effectively as possible as actors and implementers of development.
3. Religion is a motivator for achieving prosperity.
4. Extension media are an important tool and resource for implementing religious education in the community and for increasing community participation.

The role of religious instructors is crucial because they can act as a bridge between the government and the community. Their contributions can bring about positive changes,

contributing significantly to a safe and peaceful existence amidst differences. Therefore, it is our greatest hope that religious instructors will be able to carry out their roles effectively.

Therefore, ongoing efforts to mainstream religious moderation by Islamic instructors through dialogue and digital channels are crucial so that Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, can become a laboratory for peace. As is well known, Indonesia is a pluralistic and multicultural nation with diverse ethnicities, religions, languages, races, and other differences. However, this diversity still fosters harmonious coexistence among its people.

Often, conflict and division arise from misunderstandings that flow freely through the digital space. Furthermore, the digital space is deliberately exploited to create narratives that undermine each other. Yet, in essence, all religious teachings promote a peaceful, moderate life, maintaining harmony, and fostering compassion. Religious moderation is a weapon for maintaining unity in diversity.

Regarding the discussion on the Impact of the Policy on the Establishment of Religious Moderation Villages, there are at least three challenges that must be faced by society and the government. First, the development of excessive (extreme) religious views, attitudes, and practices that disregard human dignity. Second, the growth of subjective claims of truth and the imposition of will on religious interpretations, as well as the influence of economic and political interests, have the potential to trigger conflict. Third, the development of religious fervor that is inconsistent with national love within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. This is a matter of common concern and must be addressed together, so that religious communities do not distance themselves from their religions.

Efforts to address these challenges through the establishment of Religious Moderation Villages can foster public optimism and maintain stability and harmony in socio-religious life within the community. This can be done while maintaining the distinctive character of the Indonesian nation, namely the creation of a polite, tolerant society that respects differences. This spirit of togetherness in maintaining harmony among fellow Indonesian citizens is carried out through the spirit of socio-religious moderation.

Another impact that emerges is the emergence of a harmonious attitude within the fabric of social life. Harmonious attitudes refer to moderate, tolerant, harmonious, and peaceful attitudes in relation to interactions between religious communities. Behaviors of love, mutual assistance, and mutual respect are religious attitudes for a person in carrying out his duties and obligations as a caliph on earth.

Religious Narratives in the Digital Age

Advances in information technology, known as the "virtual age," have pushed social concepts such as integration, unity, and solidarity to increasingly alarming limits. Today's socio-political landscape is no longer bound by a specific political ideology, but rather by individuals competing against each other in an arena of contestation. Social reality is submerged in the jungle of virtuality. This is what Yasraf Amir Piliang calls the cyberspace age.

Cyberspace is a world of computer-based communication that folds space and time and offers a new virtual reality. In other words, cyberspace can also be defined as an imaginary location (where electronic activity takes place) designed to condense and compress space-time (time-space compression). This compression has the express

purpose of eliminating spatial barriers using sophisticated technology. The ultimate result of this compression is the acceleration of the world of life.

Information networks have become transparent and virtual. This becomes increasingly open because there are no longer binding moral categories. There are also no standards of value that limit it. As a result, the boundaries, rules, bonds, and moral codes that previously governed every action in the real world are no longer fully applicable. When everything revolves in the digital realm and across global circuits, the law that governs society is no longer the law of progress, but rather the law of orbit. In the law of orbit, anything that goes viral easily and rapidly rotates and moves globally.

In this context, the spread of religious narratives is easily orbited in seconds, spreading from one place to another, and from one information channel to another. This circulation continues from one territory to another, and from one culture to another, in a virtual form guided by the party-line orbit.

Today's digital world has produced ideas and concepts that have shaped a mindset that is deeply embedded in society. Personal religious experiences, baseless fatwas (religious edicts), and knowledge with unclear sanad (traditional sources) are continuously created in such a way as to lead society. Religious authority is shifting thanks to the colonization of information and the folding of consciousness. Previously, religious authority rested solely with ulama (Islamic scholars), ustadz (Islamic preachers), mursyid (religious teachers), and the government through the Ministry of Religious Affairs. However, religious authority is now embraced by new media, which appears impersonal and based on information networks. Everyone can easily access knowledge according to their individual tastes and needs. Religious narratives are provided like a buffet, freely available in any format.

The current state of our society, immersed in the ecstasy of virtual communication, is being exploited by certain groups to offer ideas, opinions, and fatwas to others without limits. This situation has shifted moderate understandings of Islam toward non-mainstream ones that tend to be exclusive, harsh, rigid, and even monopolize the truth. The religious narratives created have displaced the authority of ulama (Islamic scholars) as a reference for understanding sacred texts, giving rise to fabrications and distortions of understanding.

The digital world, in turn, has had a negative impact on religious structures and narratives. Various groups produce religious content based on a single understanding, fueling the growth of identity politics and tensions. In this context, the digital world (cyberspace) is exploited to give rise to the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation by groups using religion in their narratives. In fact, the digital world is being used as a platform to divide religious unity by certain groups dissatisfied with certain contestations and then seize control of religious sources' authority through digital channels.

Information disruption and the explosion of identity politics have emerged in digital spaces. The consumption, tastes, and meanings generated by the virtual world have led to changes in ways of thinking, the formulation of fatwas (religious rulings), religious expression, and even the foundations of belief. Today's religious life faces a hardening trend marked by the loss of the essence and substance of religion itself. Consequently, the national imagination is torn apart in a virtual space, packaged in a veil of fanaticism. There are at least three fundamental problems related to religious narratives created by certain groups to incite intergroup sentiment.

First, the problem of religious understanding. Electronic media is very open and accessible to the general public without restrictions. The digital space provides a variety of content, including sermons and uncontrolled religious narratives. Often, religious narratives in digital media give rise to biased understandings that tend to justify one group and condemn others. From this

perspective, Muslim groups are born with absolute religious fanaticism, exclusion, and a lack of tolerance for diversity, declaring others infidels. Yet, they gain knowledge from the free and untamed digital space.

This reality is exacerbated by the post-truth phenomenon, which has the potential to exacerbate polarization in society, marked by the increasingly viral prevalence of tendentious understandings embracing religious, racial, and interest group sentiments. This can pose both a challenge and an obstacle to spurring sustainable national development.

Second, the shift in religious authority. Religious authority is a perennially debated issue. However, in the context of the unstoppable development of technology, religious authority often shifts from the personal to the impersonal. As a result, religious life solidifies based on individual beliefs without any boundaries. When looking at differences, all that remains is fanaticism, which then gives rise to intolerance.

Third, the excessive mindset and behavior of society. The addiction to technology has led society to the ecstasy of religious consumerism. Knowledge freely absorbed through digital information channels becomes a basis for acting in accordance with what is obtained from these media. However, new media, with its practical and multitasking characteristics, has greatly diminished moderate, tolerant, and compassionate understanding of religion.

Religious narratives that have developed within the development of communication and information technology, known as the open digital channel, are easily distorted and even deconstructed, for example, information spread virally through WhatsApp. The internet, with its virtual imagination, embodying a free market of values, has successfully led to the spread of shallow, banal, and superficial religious narratives. For example, in the digital space, people can engage in moral struggles to legitimize political interests and identity. This presents both a challenge and an obstacle to mainstreaming religious moderation in digital spaces.

Information technology plays a vital role in accelerating the transformation of space and time. The proliferation of easily accessible virtual worlds has led society to a paradoxical problem. On the one hand, society is eager to renew and express its Islamic identity, but on the other, various digital spaces are colored by religious narratives that are not objective, even tending to contain fanatical values that hate other groups. This is categorized as a cycle of Islamization driven by the need for information and religious knowledge. The more religious a person is, the more likely they are to choose to read religious texts that tend to be Islamic, practical, and pragmatic.

In this context, the mainstreaming of religious moderation in the digital space is gaining momentum. The mainstreaming of religious moderation among the general public through digital spaces aims to bring something that was initially marginalized, known only to a limited number of individuals and groups, and even considered less important, into the mainstream for public awareness, consumption, and implementation. This is accomplished by utilizing the digital space, which has diverse functions, uses, capacities, and potential.

The digital space of information technology (IT) is used in the mainstreaming of religious moderation as a digital narrative, a religious narrative packaged in a well-defined and systematic way of life and then disseminated by IT. Digital narratives can unfold previously unimaginable ways of life, such as artificial life, networking, and real-time interaction. IT becomes a platform for strengthening a moderate lifestyle, enabling individuals to build identity and meaning in life. Therefore, IT serves as a counternarrative to counter religious narratives that monopolize truth. Heidegger (1971) stated that technology can open, expand, and influence a person's perspectives and patterns, while on the other hand, it can also create fear, dissatisfaction, and imprisonment.

The spread of religious moderation through the digital space of information technology can reach a wider audience, particularly the millennial generation. The struggle for digital space is key to the dominance of religious narratives in social media. A digital space that is not balanced with moderate religious narratives based on values of tolerance will give rise to free-wheeling actions. This freedom, in today's conditions, gives rise to conflict and intolerant perspectives.

Herein lies the need for the presence of Islamic religious instructors as agents of peace, voicing content on religious moderation through the digital space to counterbalance the rapid flow of information on social media. This counterbalance refers to a counter-narrative that creates a

substantive religious framing in accordance with the essential teachings of religion: moderation, tolerance, and compassion for others. This can be achieved through a loud voice in the digital space using information technology. Therefore, the technological framework that determines and disciplines religious life becomes an arena of contestation that must be seized and mastered with religious narratives based on religious moderation. Islamic religious instructors, in disseminating ideas and concepts of religious moderation, utilize various content, such as YouTube, Facebook fan pages, Twitter, Instagram, memes, or publications on studies and research on religious harmony.

This aligns with the concept explained by Mihaly Csikszentmihaly (1993), who stated that the development of digital information disseminated through certain content can influence personal development. Csikszentmihaly uses the term meme to describe a unit of cultural information. Memes are intentionally and consciously created by humans for specific purposes. Once a meme becomes a reality, it begins to act and transform the consciousness of its creator and others who come into contact with it.

When the narrative of religious moderation goes viral in the form of a meme with specific content and messages, it will lead everyone to think moderately in every action and behavior, something that was previously unheard of. Thus, memes, initially formed by the human mind and going viral in the digital space, quickly begin to shape the mind itself.

In this context, memes containing religious moderation content naturally move towards mainstreaming, leading to discourse or ideas that previously did not exist, or that existed but remained marginalized. In other words, they have not yet been widely discussed or discussed. Therefore, memes truly live culturally, harnessing human energy through behavior and behavior such as attention, perception, and thought to create energy. Once a meme is produced and viral, it reproduces itself to foster perception. According to Yasraf, memes replicate themselves to grow and thrive in the human mind as their host.

The Role of Religious Counselors in the Success of Establishing Religiously Moderate Villages

Amidst Indonesia's diverse nation, historically and sociologically, Islam is the majority religion. However, at the provincial or regional level, such as at the district/city level, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism are the dominant religions in these areas. Facts and data on religious diversity in Indonesia demonstrate that this religious diversity forms a rich mosaic that enriches the country's religious life. However, on the other hand, religious diversity also poses a potential threat to the unity of the Republic of Indonesia.

In a multicultural society, human interaction is quite intense, so every member of society needs to possess social skills in interacting with others. According to Curtis, these skills encompass three areas: affiliation (cooperation), cooperation and conflict resolution (cooperation and conflict resolution), and kindness, care, and affection/empathic skills (Curtis, 1988). The diversity of ethnicities, races, religions, languages, and values in Indonesia often leads to various conflicts. The societal conflicts stemming from intergroup violence that have erupted sporadically in various regions of Indonesia demonstrate the vulnerability of the sense of togetherness built within the Indonesian nation-state, the pervasiveness of prejudice between groups, and the lack of mutual understanding between them (Agus Akhmadi, 2019).

The numerous religious conflicts in Indonesia are generally triggered by exclusive religious attitudes and the contestation between religious groups for support that is not based on tolerance, as each group uses its power to gain the upper hand, thus fueling the conflict.

This requires the involvement of all members of society in achieving peace. The task of raising public awareness of multiculturalism is not easy, especially as it requires building public awareness that diversity is a historical inevitability. Instilling a just attitude in responding to diversity is even more difficult, as attitudes toward diversity often overlap with various social, economic, and political interests. For religious instructors as public servants, the phenomenon of cultural diversity requires them to understand multicultural knowledge and awareness, thus becoming competent in addressing differences, no matter how minor, within their target groups. Religious instructors need to enhance their perceptions, equip themselves with knowledge about

cultural diversity, and understand the forms of discrimination, stereotyping, and racism that frequently occur in society.

In a multicultural society, religious instructors are expected to be facilitators of change and experts in resolving conflicts and consulting with relevant parties to enhance harmony within their target groups. With the increasing need for public services to diverse community groups, religious instructors are faced with a broader scope of services, necessitating a multicultural understanding to be more effective in their public service delivery.

Thus, religious moderation represents a middle ground amidst Indonesia's religious diversity. Moderation is a Nusantara culture that goes hand in hand, and does not negate each other. It does not contradict each other, but seeks solutions through tolerance. In the context of religion, understanding religious texts currently shows a tendency for religious adherents to be polarized into two extreme poles. One pole overly deifies the text, ignoring the capacity of reason. The text of the Holy Scriptures is understood and then practiced without understanding the context. Some call this pole the conservative group. The other extreme pole, often called the liberal group, overly deifies reason and ignores the text itself.

Moderation must be understood and developed as a shared commitment to maintaining a complete balance, where every citizen, regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or political affiliation, listens to one another and learns from each other, practicing their skills in managing and resolving their differences.

To achieve moderation, an inclusive attitude must be avoided. According to Shihab, the concept of inclusive Islam is not merely a recognition of the diversity of society but must also be actualized through active engagement with this reality. The inclusive attitude understood in Islamic thought allows space for diversity of thought, understanding, and perception of Islam. In this understanding, truth is not confined to one group but also exists in other groups, including religious groups. This understanding stems from the belief that all religions fundamentally carry teachings of salvation. The only difference between a religion, under the guidance of a prophet from generation to generation, is the sharia (Shihab, 1999).

Therefore, it is clear that religious moderation is closely linked to maintaining togetherness through an attitude of tolerance, a legacy inherited from our ancestors that teaches us to understand those who differ from us.

As a society that is fanatical about its beliefs, a religious approach is the choice for building harmony within the community. The chosen approach is, of course, a peaceful religious attitude, which is in keeping with Indonesia's multicultural culture. With this approach, friendly, tolerant, open, and flexible religious moderation can be the answer to the growing concerns about conflict within a multicultural society. Religious moderation does not mean mixing up the truth or eliminating each person's identity. Moderation does not devalue the truth; we maintain a clear stance on issues, regarding truth, and regarding the law. Rather, religious moderation fosters an openness to accept that there are fellow countrymen outside ourselves who share the same rights as we do as a sovereign society within a national framework. Each person has beliefs outside of our faith or religion that we must respect and acknowledge. Therefore, we must consistently act and practice our religion in a moderate manner.

The primary role and function of Islamic Religious Counselors is to provide guidance and counseling to community groups, from children to the elderly. Religious counselors play a strategic role in strengthening religious life. According to him, the duties of religious counselors include being agents of moderation, guardians of morals, and guardians of the faith and morals of the community, thus strategically serving as the leading voice of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The task of religious instructors is not solely to conduct religious outreach in the narrow sense of religious studies or lectures, but rather to encompass all activities, including guidance and information related to human resource and moral development programs. Islamic instructors act as responsible guides to the community, leading the community to a safe and prosperous life (Uswatun Hasanah and Nurul Fadilah, 2022).

The position of Islamic instructors today is highly strategic, both in conveying religious missions and development missions. Islamic instructors also serve as role models, a place for the

community to ask questions and to consult, helping to resolve and resolve various problems faced by the Muslim community. The role of instructors is highly strategic because they are an extension of the government, authorized to carry out guidance and other outreach tasks. They are also expected to be role models for the community and good role models. This role undoubtedly has a positive impact in assisting the government in maintaining peace amidst existing differences.

Policy Alternative

The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has a Religious Development program. Religious counseling is a strategic activity unit, particularly in carrying out its function of facilitating the implementation of development in the religious sector (KMA Number 2 of 2010). Religious counselors, as officials of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, have a strategic role related to their duties, responsibilities, and authority to provide religious and development guidance and counseling through religious language. This role aligns with the goal of religious counseling, enabling every citizen to reflect and actualize their understanding, appreciation, and practice of the values of faith and piety, along with a multicultural perspective (Arnis Rachmadhani, 2015).

A multicultural perspective is crucial for counselors to provide religious and development guidance and counseling to the community without encountering cultural barriers. Therefore, it is crucial for counselors to understand the functional values within the local community that can be used to support counseling activities, particularly development counseling using religious language. The development of multicultural insight for religious communities is an implementation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy direction for building harmony. This shift in paradigm and approach shifts from a formal-bureaucratic paradigm to a humanist-cultural one, shifting from a top-down approach that tends to be coercive from the government to a bottom-up approach that encourages participation and initiative from the community.

This is based on the fact that society itself possesses cultural values in the form of local wisdom that strongly support the realization of a harmonious and harmonious life. The ultimate goal of religious outreach is to create a society with an adequate understanding of its religion, demonstrated through committed and consistent practice, coupled with multicultural insight, to create a harmonious life order and mutual respect. Therefore, the existence of religious outreach is crucial, with the hope that their presence can act as agents of religious moderation in the era of pluralistic Indonesian society. Religious moderation aims to mediate between fundamental and extreme understandings or teachings, thereby maintaining peace and comfort in a pluralistic environment amidst differences.

In the digital realm, the role of religious instructors is crucial. Islamic instructors must act as mediators in educating the public about the information they obtain through social media. This is where Islamic instructors, acting as agents of peace, voice content promoting religious moderation through digital platforms, serve as a counterbalance to the overwhelming flow of information on social media. This counterbalance refers to counter-narratives that foster substantive religious framing in accordance with the essential teachings of religion: moderation, tolerance, and compassion.

This can be achieved through a strong voice in the digital space using information technology. Therefore, the technological framework that determines and disciplines religious life becomes an arena of contestation that must be seized and mastered with religious narratives based on religious moderation. Islamic instructors, in disseminating ideas and concepts of religious moderation, utilize various forms of content, such as content on YouTube, Facebook fan pages, Twitter, Instagram, memes, or publications on studies and research on religious harmony.

Furthermore, it is necessary to involve policymakers, specifically the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, both at the central and regional levels, in preparing a series of regulations. This series of regulations could act as a deterrent against those spreading hoaxes, which could lead to national division and disintegration. Adequate funding is also crucial to support the Religious Moderation Village Program.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Mainstreaming religious moderation cannot operate in isolation; it must proceed in tandem to achieve its desired goals. Making religious moderation a shared framework is a key principle that serves as the foundation for managing a moderate and tolerant religious life in a multicultural society.

Moreover, technological developments demand careful dissemination of content that is appropriate and suitable for the digital community, which is primarily the millennial generation.

In this era of openness, people acquire religious knowledge in an instant and pragmatic manner. The chain of knowledge is no longer the key to the learning process. Those who quickly present a religious narrative will easily gain followers. Therefore, mainstreaming religious moderation by providing and disseminating content that counters the narratives of discordant religious texts can act as a balancing voice, even a dominant voice, shifting the monolithic and rigid understanding of religion.

The digital era demands that society be cautious to avoid falling into the trap of religious consumerism. Scientific knowledge must be thoroughly studied and researched to avoid being trapped in digital information channels, which then become the basis for actions based on what is learned from those media. Therefore, religious moderation is the basis for strengthening religious understanding through digital spaces, which have multitasking characteristics, to strengthen moderate, tolerant, and compassionate religious understanding.

Recommendation

In this context, the author recommends to the Head of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Southeast Sulawesi Province, through the Islamic Religious Information Division, and the Head of the Regency/City Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, through the Islamic Community Guidance Section, that in a multicultural society, the role of Islamic religious instructors should be enhanced. They are expected to act as facilitators of change and experts in conflict resolution and consult with relevant parties to enhance harmony within their target groups. With the increasing need for public services for diverse community groups, religious instructors are faced with a broader scope of services, necessitating a multicultural understanding to be more effective in their public service delivery.

In addressing the social phenomenon of fanatical communities, the author recommends that Islamic religious instructors utilize a religious approach as an option for building harmony within the community. The chosen approach, of course, is a peaceful religious attitude, in keeping with Indonesia's multicultural culture. With this approach, friendly, tolerant, open, and flexible religious moderation can be a solution to the growing concerns about conflict within a multicultural society. Religious moderation does not mean mixing up the truth and eliminating one's individual identity. Moderation does not devalue the truth; we maintain a clear stance on issues, regarding truth, and regarding the law. Rather, religious moderation fosters an openness to accepting that beyond ourselves, there are fellow citizens who share the same rights as we do as a sovereign society within the framework of nationality. Each person has beliefs outside of our faith or religion that we must respect and acknowledge. Therefore, we must consistently act and practice our religion in a moderate manner.

Religious instructors, as officials of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, have a strategic role related to their duties, responsibilities, and authority to provide religious guidance and development through religious language. This role aligns with the goal of religious education, enabling every citizen to reflect and actualize their understanding, appreciation, and practice of the values of faith and piety, along with a multicultural perspective. The next recommendation is addressed to

the Minister of Religious Affairs, through the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, to continuously monitor, evaluate, and provide assistance to the establishment of Religious Moderation Villages to ensure the program runs smoothly. This requires instructing the heads of the Provincial Offices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Regency/City Offices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Sub-district Offices of Religious Affairs, and Functional Islamic Religious Instructors and Non-Civil Servant Islamic Instructors to consistently provide guidance, mentoring, and assistance to the designated Religious Moderation Villages.

To support the establishment of Religious Moderation Villages, the author recommends that the Directorate General of Islamic Community Guidance provide adequate funding through the annual Budget Allocation (DIPA) budget allocation, particularly for operational costs, so that the Religious Moderation Village program runs as expected. Therefore, mapping the potential of Religious Moderation Villages for empowerment is necessary.

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