Banyumas Regency Islamic Religious Extension Strategy in Strengthening Religious Moderation

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the communication strategies of Islamic Religious Counselors in Banyumas Regency in strengthening religious moderation. The problem focuses on the strategy of Islamic Religious Counselors in promoting religious moderation in the post-Covid 19 pandemic era. This research is qualitative research with a descriptive approach. The theories used in this research are Harold Laswell's communication theory, Uses and Gratification theory, and Campbell’s theory of religious encounters and new media. Data collection was carried out through observation, interviews, and document analysis. The research informants, consisting of 30 Islamic Religious Counselors in the Banyumas Regency, were selected through purposive sampling based on the research objectives. This study concludes that Islamic Religious Counselors in Banyumas Regency, first, employ a strategy involving planning, understanding the characteristics of the target audience for da'wah (religious outreach), determining the material to be conveyed, selecting the delivery method, and choosing the communication media. Second, they carry out strategic planning by enhancing their knowledge of religious moderation through participation in workshops, training sessions, and independent study. They also conduct religious moderation outreach to congregations, both in face-to-face interactions and through media platforms such as radio, Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube. Furthermore, they practice religious moderation in various contexts, including interactions with Muslims, adherents of local culture, and followers of other religions. This research is valuable for the development of studies on strategies for promoting religious moderation at the grassroots level.

Keywords: Communication Strategy; Islamic Religious Counselor; Religious Moderation; Banyumas Regency.


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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a multicultural country consisting of various ethnicities, languages, and religions (Akhmadi, 2019). On the one hand, diversity is a gift that is a strength in building the nation’s glory; but on the other hand, it can be a threat to social unity and harmony (Subchi et al., 2022).

In the framework of strengthening harmony and building unity amidst diversity, the government, in this case driven by the Ministry of Religion, has launched religious moderation. (Hefni, 2020). The Minister of Religion at that time, Lukman Hakim Saefuddin designated 2019 as the year of religious moderation along with the designation of 2019 as the International Year of Moderation (Qolbi, 2019).

Religious moderation is a religious attitude that is not extreme and prioritizes the values of tolerance and harmony of all communities (Akhmadi, 2019; Akmaliah, 2020; Sulaiman et al., 2022b). The word "moderation" is often equated with the word "wasathiyyah" in Arabic. "Wasathiyyah" comes from the word "wasatha'" which means "something that is at both ends and is part of it" or also means "the middle of everything" (R&D and Education and Training Agency, Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, Research, Development, Training, 2021; Shihab, 2020). Religious moderation refers to religious paradigms, attitudes, and practices that seek to create shared prosperity (Ahmad Hasan Ridwan et al., 2022; Salik, 2019). Since 2019, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has launched a program/movement of religious moderation to promote attitudes that reflect moderate character, which includes: 1) having a strong national commitment, 2) tolerance and mutual respect for one another, 3) anti-violence, and 4) accommodating local cultures (Badan Litbang dan Diklat kementerian Agama RI, Research, Development, Training, 2021).

The Indonesian nation has implemented religious moderation for a long time (Inayatillah et al., 2022). The Indonesian nation has the motto "tepo senior," emphasizing tolerance and harmony in its values. Religious life in Indonesia has traditionally been characterized by full tolerance, peace, and harmony (Salik, 2019). However, various incidents such as bombings, religiously motivated riots, and other extremist behaviors have raised concerns about radicalism and extremism. In response to these challenges and in the pursuit of preventing and addressing radical and extreme attitudes, the religious moderation movement was launched by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in 2019 (Research, Development, Training, 2021). This movement aims to promote values such as a strong commitment to the nation, tolerance, mutual respect, non-violence, and the accommodation of local cultures as essential components of religious moderation.

To make the religious moderation movement a success, various steps have been taken, from outreach to institutionalizing religious moderation into various binding programs and policies. Several concrete steps include making religious moderation mainstream in the programs and agenda of the Ministry of Religion (Junaedi, 2019).

To strengthen religious moderation at the lower levels of society, the Ministry of Religion has made religious moderation one of the main tasks of Islamic Religious Counselors (Solla Taufiq, 2021). Islamic Religious Instructors (PAI) are considered to have important and strategic value in strengthening religious moderation because they are closest to the community (Agustina, 2021). PAI is the spearhead of the Ministry of Religion in instilling religious values in society, including the cultivation of inclusive and moderate religious beliefs and values (Agustina, 2021; Barmawie & Humaira, 2018). Formally, religious instructors have the responsibility for implementing development in the field of religion, especially in realizing the quality of religious life in a multicultural society (Barmawie & Humaira, 2018).

One of the districts renowned for its cultural and religious diversity is Banyumas. Banyumas Regency is characterized by a rich tapestry of religious traditions, encompassing Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. This vibrant mix of faiths reflects the pluralistic nature of Banyumas and underscores the significance of promoting religious moderation to maintain harmony, mutual respect, and coexistence among its diverse religious communities. The religious moderation program initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia holds particular relevance in regions.
like Banyumas, where diverse religious groups coexist, emphasizing the importance of fostering tolerance and understanding among its residents (Inayatillah et al., 2022; Salik, 2019; Research, Development, Training, 2021). The number of adherents of each religion can be seen in Table 1.

### Table 1. Data on Religious Counselors in Banyumas Regency in 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Number of Adherents</th>
<th>Number of Counselors</th>
<th>Religious比Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>1,899,434</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>1:7,872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>24,932</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1:1,918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>17,182</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1:1,864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>2,695</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1:348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddha</td>
<td>3,094</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1:520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confucian</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1:162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though it consists of various religions, they all live in harmony side by side so the Banyumas Regency is one of the regencies that has a high harmony index. Banyumas is one of the districts/cities that has a high level of tolerance amidst the reality of existing plurality and diversity. The index of religious harmony and tolerance in the district reached 92% (Editorial Team, 2022).

A high level of harmony indicates the success of efforts to mainstream and promote religious moderation carried out by various parties. In this case, religious counselors have a very important role because they are the front guard of religious ministries that have direct contact with the community (Uswatusolihah, 2022h). The success of the task of Islamic religious instructors in strengthening religious moderation is influenced, among other things, by the communication strategies carried out as well as the selection of appropriate communication methods and media (Utomo et al., 2021). Islamic religious instructors are preachers and communicators who deliver religious ministry programs. They are required to have good communication strategy skills to deal with various complex problems in society. The success of an Islamic religious instructor in carrying out their duties depends on their understanding of the audience they are dealing with (Hasibuan et al., 2022).

Apart from that, the COVID-19 pandemic and advances in communication technology have affected various areas of people's lives, including the religious sector. In today's digital era, where there are many choices of communication media that can be used, the success of extension tasks is also greatly influenced by the type of media used. In this case, people will choose and use certain media according to their needs and expected satisfaction.

Therefore, this article explains the communication strategy of PAI Banyumas Regency in strengthening religious moderation, as well as communication media with an analytical knife based on Harold Lasswell's communication theory, Uses and Gratification theory (U&G theory) and the theory of religion and new media.

Communication strategy is a guideline for communication planning and communication management to achieve a goal. To achieve this goal, the communication strategy must be able to show how the approach to activities continues to change according to the situation and conditions faced (Gangara, 2015). About the communication process and the function it carries out in society, Harold Lasswell describes it with the phrase "Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?" (Mulyana, 2012). According to Lasswell, there are three roles of communication in society, namely: 1) monitoring the environment by informing people about the dangers and opportunities that exist around them; 2) connecting different currents in society so that it can respond well to the environment; 3) transmit knowledge and social values from one generation to the next.

In this case, PAI not only has the task of being a communicator who conveys the teachings of religious moderation to the community, but they must also be able to instill the values of moderation. On the other hand, today's society is not passive and homogeneous. People are active humans who have their own will and abilities to their socio-
cultural and psychological characteristics and conditions.

For this reason, this discussion also uses the Uses and Gratification theory (U&G theory). Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) offers one explanation for why people use media, as well as the gratifications obtained from media use and access. Uses and Gratifications Theory marks people as active and motivated in using media. From this point of view, audiences are considered to actively select and use media according to their specific needs. The uses and gratifications theory explains "how and why media use". The U & G theory is focused on five fundamental assumptions. First, communication behavior is goal-directed and motivated. Second, people are in an active position, when they choose communication media that meet their needs. Third, a person can determine the motives and satisfaction of his communication. Fourth, media is focused on providing communication styles to pay attention to, select, and use. That’s why there is competition between communication tools. Fifth, people are influenced by several social and psychological factors when they choose communication alternatives (Ratcliff et al., 2017). The use of media by society is considered a social movement for media use (Media Use as Social Action/MA SA model). According to MASA, people use media according to their desires and needs.

Meanwhile, about digital media, this article borrows an analysis carried out by HA Campbell regarding the influence and negotiation between religion and new media (Campbell, 2010). According to Campbell, the presence of digital technology with the sophistication of the internet has influenced society's religious patterns. In this case, the presence of various media platforms has changed how people obtain and convey religious knowledge. In this case, religious instructors are required to have the ability to utilize advances in communication media technology to gain knowledge, process knowledge and convey their knowledge about religious moderation (Campbell, 2010; Gary R. Bunt, 2018).

Research that discusses the communication strategy of Islamic religious instructors, among others, was carried out by Babay Barmawie and Fadhila Humaira regarding the communication strategy of religious instructors at KUA Duren Sawit in fostering religious tolerance (Barmawie & Humaira, 2018) and Hasibuan et al. Hasibuan et al. regarding the Communication Strategy of Islamic Religious Instructors in the socialization of Health protocols (Hasibuan et al., 2022). Another research on Islamic religious instructors was conducted by Muchlis regarding WhatsApp as a Da'wah Media for Islamic Religious Counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic (Muchlis, 2020), Giri Lukmanto's research on the perceptions and behavior of Fact Checking Islamic Religious Counselors at the Ministry of Religion (Lumakto & I, 2020), and Agustina's research on Evaluation of Training for Non-PNS Religious Instructors (Agustina, 2021), Nandang Kusnandar's research on the Da'wah Communication of Religious Instructors in providing an understanding of religious moderation in the City of Bandung (Kusnandar, 2020). This paper is different from previous studies on communication strategies for Islamic religious instructors. This article aims to describe the communication strategy of Islamic Religious Counselors in strengthening religious moderation in the digital era after the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses an interpretive-phenomenological approach. In this research, phenomenology is used to reveal the communication strategies of Banyumas Regency Islamic Religious Instructors (PAI) in strengthening religious moderation in the communities they support. This research is qualitative research with a verstehen approach where the researcher is outside the informant's social context and tries to understand the meaning of what is said (Kuswarno, 2006).

Research data was obtained by observation, in-depth interviews (dept. interviews), and documentation. This research involved 19 Islamic Religious Instructors (PAI), consisting of 3 PAI with PNS status and 16 non-PNS PAI known as Honorary Religious Instructors (PAH) who were selected using purposive sampling. Honorary (PAH). Currently, the number of PAI in Banyumas Regency with PNS status is 22 people and non-PNS Extension Officers are 218 people. Determining the number of informants was carried out by following Cresswell’s opinion, that in phenomenological studies, the data
collection process can be taken from only a few people (Creswell, 1998). The following is the research informant data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>L/P</th>
<th>Place of Duty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tiny</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Patikraja District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Faidus Saad</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Banyumas district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Amen Supangat</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Banyumas district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Muhammad S.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>District Ajbarang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Elfalina Farokh</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Baturraden district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Nani</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>District Baturaden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Come back</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>District Gumelar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Dwi Astuti</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>District jatilawang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Riya Purwaningrum</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>District Kalibagor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Ahmad Nafiuddin</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>District Karanglewas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Nur Hidayat</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>District Twins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Umri Rofiqoh</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>District Lumbir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Pujo Rachmadi</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>District North Purwokerto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Nasicha</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>District South Purwokerto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Aminuddin</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>District Purwojati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Muhammad Masruin</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>District Rawalo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Lukman Hakim</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Tambak District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Suroso</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>District Sokaraja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Rikin</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>District Discordant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data analysis technique used is the Miles and Huberman analysis model which includes data reduction, data presentation, and verification (Sugiyono, 2019). The researcher then presents the data in narrative form as obtained in the research. Checking the validity of the data is carried out through triangulation.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Islamic Religious Instructors (PAI) as Religious Moderation Communicators**

Since 2019, the Ministry of Religion has been very aggressive in promoting and making diverse moderation mainstream. Various components of religious ministries have the task of participating in making religious moderation a success. One of the components of the Ministry of Religion that deals directly with the community is Islamic Religious Counselors (PAI). Extension workers are considered to be the spearhead of the religious ministry in instilling religious values in society. They have responsibility for implementing development in the religious sector, especially in realizing quality religious life in a multicultural society. The existence of religious instructors spread throughout the country has an important role in creating a tolerant religious atmosphere.

The existence of Banyumas Regency Islamic Religious Instructors (PAI) cannot be separated from the duties and authority of the Banyumas Regency Ministry of Religion, as stated in the 2020 - 2024 Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMN), which contains matters that must be made a priority. There are 7 (seven) main objectives of the Office of the Ministry of Religion of Banyumas Regency in implementing the development of the religious sector in Banyumas Regency, namely: 1) Improving the quality of understanding and practice of religious teachings; 2) Improving the quality of religious life services; 3) Increasing the utilization and quality of management of religious economic potential; 4) Increasing the quality of religious harmony; 5) Improving the quality of the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage; 6) Increasing and equalizing access to and quality of religious and religious education; and 7) Improving the quality of development governance in the religious sector (Head of the Banyumas Regency Ministry of Religion Office, 2020).

As of 2021, Banyumas Regency has 22 PAI with PNS status (known as Functional Islamic Religious Instructors/PAIF) and 218 Non-PNS PAI (known as Honorary Religious Instructors/PAH). PAIF supervises several
Honorary Religious Instructors (PAH) whose duties are spread across various sub-districts and villages.

Religious instructors are an extension of the Ministry of Religion regarding their role as exemplars, and role models as well as a place to ask questions and become a reference regarding all religious problems faced. PAI has the task of strengthening the mainstream of religious moderation, in addition to their duties in Islamic religious counseling which covers the areas of 1) Eradicating Al-Qur’an Illiteracy; 2) Sakinah Family Development; 3) Zakat empowerment; 4) Waqf empowerment; 5) Empowerment of Halal Products; 6) Fostering Religious Harmony; 7) Prevention of Radicalism and Development of Splinter Flows and 8) Prevention of Drug Abuse and Control of HIV/Aids.

In general, as a source of information and communicators of religious moderation, PAI Banyumas Regency has understood the meaning of religious moderation as they have obtained from training and those organized by the Ministry of Religion of Banyumas Regency. They understand religious moderation as 1) Presenting a subtle face of Islam; 2) Islam is a moderate religion even without the word moderation; 3) Being middle-of-the-road; 4) Having a national commitment; 5) Maintaining tolerance and harmony; 6) Respect and be willing to cooperate with followers of other religions; 7) Accommodating to Local Culture (Uus Uswatusolihah, 2022).

Communication Strategy of Banyumas Regency Islamic Religious Instructors in Promoting Religious Moderation

The success of an Islamic Religious Instructor (PAI) in carrying out his duties in society is influenced by several components, including the communication strategy implemented. Appropriate strategies must be prepared, planned, and implemented in the extension task to achieve the goals.

PAI Banyumas Regency has several communication strategies to achieve the goal of strengthening religious moderation, namely: 1) Understanding the social context of the target community; 2) Understanding the characteristics and needs of the target community; 3) Understanding the abilities and competencies of the extension workers themselves, both in terms of costs, time and energy, and abilities; 4) Planning a work program to strengthen moderation; 5) Select and determine relevant material to be presented; 6) Determine effective media and communication methods; 7) Evaluate the implementation of the program that has been prepared; 8) Make improvements and adjustments based on feedback from the community(Uswatusolihah, 2022d, 2022e).

Program planning is usually carried out after the instructor knows the work area, the target community, and the potential abilities they have. In addition, work program planning is also often consulted and coordinated with the head of the local Extension Working Group (Pokjaluh)(Uswatusolihah, 2022a). PAI Banyumas Regency’s communication strategy for strengthening religious moderation consists of two forms, namely:

1. Strengthening Knowledge of Religious Moderation

As an effort to make the religious moderation program a success, the Ministry of Religion first provides understanding and training on various moderation for religious instructors in the form of providing Religious Moderation module books and holding workshops or training on religious moderation. In this case, the Banyumas district Islamic Religious Counselors (PAI) took part in various training and workshops according to the schedule provided (Admin, 2022).

In addition, PAI Banyumas Regency also explores knowledge and understanding of religious moderation through coaching and regular meetings of Banyumas Regency Islamic religious instructors. PAI Banyumas Regency also deepens understanding of religious moderation by seeking knowledge independently (self-taught) through studying books and references obtained during training and from digital media. Even so, they remain careful in gaining knowledge from online media, especially in terms of selecting sources and media portals. One of the instructors said (Uswatusolihah, 2022j):

"Currently, any material can be obtained from the media, from cellphones... everything is as important as having a network... but we still have to choose the right source of information, for example, if we are instructors instead of news and information from the Ministry of Religion, from NU or Muhammadiyah, or from..."
the channel of the kayaks that we have acknowledged..."

2. Socialization of Religious Moderation

Banyumas district PAI carries out socialization and delivery of religious moderation through various methods, namely direct face-to-face methods and using the media. The direct communication model used is a lecture model in the form of recitation. Recitation is carried out on a scheduled basis at least once a week. This method was chosen because this method was considered the easiest and most effective method. There are many advantages to the direct lecture method, including being able to meet each other, greet and chat, and be followed by a question and answer session. One instructor said:

"You both feel comfortable, you can interact directly with the congregation so that messages can be conveyed directly and it is possible to continue with interactive dialogue (Uswatusolihah, 2022f)"

"When we give lectures, we can meet directly with the congregation and ask questions directly (Uswatusolihah, 2022a)"

Some instructors said that delivering material directly face to face gave them happiness. Meeting face to face, in routine or incidental recitations when there is an invitation, also means building friendships. At that time, there was dialogue, interaction, and chatting which allowed people to tell stories and share about the religious problems that were occurring.

Apart from carrying out direct outreach, Banyumas district religious instructors have also used the media to help carry out their duties. The media used include radio, digital media such as YouTube, and social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp. Both conventional media and new media.

The radio media that is often used by PAI Banyumas Regency is Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) Purwokerto.

"We already have a collaboration with RRI Purwokerto, so any religious instructor, who wants to carry out da'wah or have their extension work done at RRI, just schedule it alternately so that each instructor can receive the benefits of this collaboration (Uswatusolihah, 2022b).

Some instructors also use YouTube to promote religious moderation. One of the instructors who has a YouTube channel and actively promotes religious moderation on YouTube is Faidus Saad. The YouTube channel address used is https://youtu.be/rUSQ0Fthjbg and also: https://youtu.be/x4WLtTNHbOs.
Almost all counselors use WhatsApp media to communicate with their congregation, including delivering material on religious moderation. The social media Facebook and WhatsApp were chosen because these two media were considered easy to use. Apart from that, some of the targets or objects of communication are rural communities, most of whom do not have social media because they do not have Android phones or laptops. Some people have cell phones or laptops and use social media in the form of Facebook and WhatsApp. Interview with Aminuddin (Uswatusolihah, 2022c):

In the current era, we as extension workers can use social media to convey material. However, when choosing social media you have to look first, at whether the congregation is using it or not?... well, if it’s a village community, it’s not difficult... if the congregation is older, they usually don’t have social media because they don’t have a cellphone, let alone a laptop. What’s the point... people don’t even work using laptops... Well, the ones that are mostly used by young mothers and fathers are... WA and Facebook... so having WA makes it easier... as long as it’s conveyed, and immediately accepted by people in the same group...there is a group...

To provide convenience and attract attention, the instructors created a religious moderation message flyer.

The use of digital flyer media is considered more effective as stated: "More freely, can be shared, can reach all levels and generations"
"The material is presented more widely and to participate in coloring and meeting the demands of the modern era".

"If you use flayers, follow the trend for the congregation or young audience, and get them interested."

3. Implementation of religious moderation in life

Strengthening religious moderation in Banyumas Regency is also carried out by practicing an understanding of religious moderation in PAI's daily life. The practice of religious moderation in real life is considered an effective strengthening effort because people can see firsthand examples of religious moderation activities. PAI's implementation of religious moderation is divided into three forms:

a) Tolerance towards differences among Muslims

Most counselors think that there is a necessity to implement this religious moderation within the Islamic ummah itself. The counselors are of the view that moderation within the Muslim community itself is very important considering that within the Muslim community, there are many various religious organizations and religious understandings. These differences often give rise to competition, friction, and conflict both on a closed and open scale. Therefore, a moderate attitude must also be practiced in interacting with fellow Muslims themselves. An interview with Tini, a civil servant instructor from Patikraja sub-district stated (Uswatusolihah, 2022g):

"Religious moderation is not being selfish, harsh, and so on, and we have to accept every tradition that exists around us... like that... in fact, we often clash, not with other religions, but we clash with the egoism of our Islamic principles. ...we sometimes don't admit it...we sometimes don't moderate ourselves with fellow Muslims. For example, between NU and Muhammadiyah...or NU exactly...in fact, sometimes we don't...not what it's called...not making tolerance, sharing or strengthening each other...but we strengthen...sometimes we strengthen each other's egos. ...as often happens. I have encountered something like that. It's like this, it's like this...it should be like this...the trick of being strong with our principles, sometimes we don't see that we are being moderate.

b) Be moderate towards local cultural practices

PAI Banyumas Regency views local cultural practices are a necessity amidst the plurality of the Indonesian nation. The practitioners and adherents of local beliefs and culture are the heirs or successors of the teachings of their ancestors from generation to generation. Therefore, they usually hold these customs very strongly. The best attitude is to respect them, not disturb them.

The preaching delivered to them must be done wisely. Therefore, a good attitude is not to label them as infidels or deviants. It would be better to try to interpret what they do from the perspective of Islamic values. A Counselor said (Uswatusolihah, 2022i):

"Islam is a culture, there are Islamic teachings that also have cultural origins. If there is a culture that is not by Islamic teachings, then straighten it out without eliminating aspects of the culture. Sea alms in Cilacap. Almsgiving from the sea provides harmony with nature. They put various objects in the sea, buffalo heads... We give alms to the sea every time we give to the sea... We take the fish every day..."

c) Establishing cooperation with adherents of other religions

Counselors believe that religious moderation is very important in interactions with followers of different religions. The instructors argued that as Muslims, Islam teaches goodness, therefore every religious follower must do good and work together with people of other religions. However, the extension workers seem to agree that cooperation with non-Muslims must be in the fields of Ramallah and humanity, not in the field of worship.

Therefore, counselors' opinions are divided when they see that mass organizations are preaching in churches or helping non-Muslim worship activities. Some consider that preaching in church, or getting involved in Christmas celebration activities and non-Muslim worship as religious moderation that is "going too far". However, others think that the aim is to get them interested in Islam.

One of the implementations of religious moderation with adherents of other different religions, the religious instructors in Banyumas Regency formed a community or association with the name: SPALI (Solidarity of Interfaith
Religious Instructors). SPALI was founded on August 5, 2020. The founding of SPALI was attended by the Chair of the Banyumas Regency FKUB Dr. H. Raqib, M.Ag, and Head of Regional Office of the Central Ministry of Religion H. Mustain Ahmad. Appointed as chairman of SPALI was Mr. Lubab Habiburrahman, as the initiator and also chairman of the Pokjaluh (Religious Extension Working Group) of Banyumas Regency) (Uswatusolihah, 2022e). SPALI has a moderation greeting "Rukun Ragam Sepadan".

"In the counseling, there is a greeting for religious moderation: Rukun Ragam Sepadan. Rukun means what is important is harmony, and Ragam means respecting plural differences. Equivalent means within the state scope it is commensurate."

The activities carried out by SPALI, as a forum for communication between religious instructors, include holding interfaith pilgrimages. (Admin, 2021), distribute free takjil create choirs and sing together at various events and forums (Edo, 2022):

CONCLUSION

Islamic Religious Counselors in the Banyumas Regency have a communication strategy to strengthen religious moderation in the Banyumas Regency, especially in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. The strategies implemented include making plans, understanding the characteristics of the target of da’wah, determining the material to be delivered, determining delivery methods, and determining communication media.

Banyumas Regency Islamic Religious Counselors implement a strategy to strengthen religious moderation by first strengthening their understanding of religious moderation. Strengthening understanding is carried out by attending workshops, training, and independent study either through modules, books, or online media. After having an understanding of religious moderation, they socialized religious moderation to the congregation, either face to face or using radio, Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube. The choice of media is adjusted to who the men are being targeted.

They also practice and implement religious moderation in their daily lives. The implementation and practice of moderation include the practice of moderation with fellow Muslims, the practice of religious moderation with adherents of local culture, and the practice of religious moderation with adherents of other religions.

The findings of this research are useful for developing studies on strategies for strengthening religious moderation at the lower level. For this reason, based on research findings, the author recommends several things, first, strengthening understanding of the discourse on religious moderation for religious counselors in Indonesia. Second, it is necessary to research strategies to strengthen religious moderation at the lower level with different societal characteristics.


