OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF THE RELIGIOUS EXTENSION PROFESSION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

PELUANG DAN TANTANGAN PROFESI PENYULUH AGAMA DI ERA DIGITAL

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Abstrak

Perkembangan zaman yang semakin canggih, perkembangan iptek yang semakin modern, ditandai dengan penggunaan internet di dunia sudah sangat luar biasa. Pengguna aktif media sosial sekarang di Indonesia ini lebih dari 100 juta populasi dalam mengaksesnya. Media digital dengan segala kemudahan mendorong manusia mengalihkan aktivitas hidup melalui perangkat digital. Tidak terkecuali aktivitas keagamaan. Aspek-aspek sosial keagamaan dapat dilakukan melalui media digital di antaranya penyuluhan agama. Penyuluhan agama dapat dikatakan sebagian dari dakwah, yaitu proses penyampaian ajaran Islam yang dilakukan oleh seseorang yang memiliki keterampilan di bidangnya guna memberikan bimbingan dan penyuluhan baik berupa pembinaan ataupun pemberdayaan kepada masyarakat luas. Penyuluh agama menggunakan digital sebagai peluang untuk melakukan melakukan aktivitasnya terhadap masyarakat. Sekalipun menjadi tantangan tersendiri untuk profesi penyuluh agama yang mana harus benar-benar menguasi ilmunya. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif yang bertujuan untuk memahami peluang serta tantangan penyuluh di era digital.

Kata Kunci: *peluang; tantangan; penyuluh agama; era digital*

Abstract

The development of an increasingly sophisticated era, the development of increasingly modern science and technology, is marked by the use of the internet in the world which is extraordinary. Currently active users of social media in Indonesia have more than 100 million people accessing it. Digital media with all its convenience encourages people to divert their life activities through digital devices. Religious activities are no exception. Social and religious aspects can be carried out through digital media, including religious extension. Religious extension can be said to be part of da'wah, namely the process of conveying Islamic teachings carried out by someone who has skills in their field in order to provide guidance and extension in the form of guidance or empowerment to the wider community. Religious educators use digital as an opportunity to carry out their activities for the community. Even though it is a challenge in itself for the religious extension profession, which must really master its knowledge. In this research, researchers used a descriptive qualitative method which aims to understand the opportunities and challenges of extension workers in the digital age.

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INTRODUCTION

The current century is characterized by the rapid development of science and technology. The development of science and technology has now succeeded in creating a modern civilization, and promises various advances that can also make it easier for those who can meet all the demands of modernization (Bustamam, 1996). The development of technology at this time has grown rapidly and can no longer be stopped. Now almost all aspects of life involve technology in it. In human life today, the development of technology provides or offers various conveniences in delivering humans to a higher and higher quality life and a better standard of living. With the rapid development of technology, it has an impact on users, both among children, adolescents and adults, to access good things or sometimes can also access things that are out of values or culture in life. In the main elements of religion, Islam has tried to regulate human life, which is so reduced in understanding religion, because people still depend a lot on economic factors and are still pursuing worldly so as to neglect carrying out something that smells of the afterlife.

That way the existence of extension is very helpful in building the community towards religious awareness, behaving so that it becomes akhlakul karimah. The purpose of guidance and extension is to increase community resilience from the influence of social pathology (Sartono, 1997). Increase the ability to adapt to various social changes without having to lose identity, realize the (positive) potential of the community and increase awareness and quality of worship. That way the influence of Islamic religious guidance and extension can formulate various efforts to provide assistance in increasing awareness of faith and devotion, as healing and repair, as well as efforts to maintain faith and devotion to Allah SWT (Nurkholipah, 2017). Because worshiping at the mosque is one of the ways of living the life of the community to get closer to Allah Swt to have a noble character and build a good religious community that deserves to be obeyed. Because it is very much needed to create peace of heart and peace of mind.

Today's digital age makes an opportunity and at the same time a challenge for us to improve the standard of living that can be fulfilled, namely peace, tranquility, and self-faith. The spread of religious extension activities. Islam is a current phenomenon that can be enjoyed daily. In addition, extension officers depend on the objectives to be achieved, but universally it can be said that the extension material can be categorized into three main things, namely: aqidah (a matter of faith), shari'ah (an Islamic issue) and akhlakul karimah (a matter of character) (Depag RI, 2007).

Islamic extension activities are now widely found in government

agencies, companies, hospitals, radio, television, and the internet. Not only in public places such as mosques, pesantren, majelis taklim. The many challenges faced by religious extensions, ranging from self-confidence, motivation and sincerity are the first major challenges that must be faced. Because it is quite difficult to invite people to goodness unless it is done by religious extensions who are patient, tenacious, unyielding supported by very adequate knowledge.

Regarding knowledge, religious extensions are required not only to have religious knowledge. However, other relevant knowledge that can support the success of its mission, we both know that religious knowledge is very broad, covering the life of the world and the hereafter. Likewise, social dynamics continue to develop and require explanations, reasonable solutions, not just beliefs.

METHODOLOGY

The type of research used is qualitative research with descriptive methods, in which researchers describe an object, phenomenon, or social *setting* in a narrative writing, meaning that the data and facts collected are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers (Anggito, 2018). Researchers focus on case studies and actual problemsas they exist at the time of the research by collecting some past research as analyzed data. The process of data and data analysis uses literature by looking in books, journals, research reports and articles related to keywords

opportunities, challenges, religious extensions and looking for data with relevance according to the problems discussed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Definition of Islamic Religious Extension

Extension, from the word "suluh" means with a torch and serves as an illumination for the community. So, the religios extension can be said to be an illuminator who conveys messages to the public about the principles and ethics of good religious values. Saamsudin (1977) gives the opinion of extension as a non-formal education system without coercion in order to make someone aware and convinced that something recommended will bring to the improvement of something done or done before. So it can be concluded that extension is an effort to invite individuals to be aware and willing to implement new ideas or new innovations.

The Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. 791 of 1985 provides a decision on Islamic religious extension, namely religious advisors in the context of mental development, morals and devotion to God Almighty. The development of religious extension activities has been carried out by many organizations and da'wah institutions, even the development of religious extension institutions has also become a development policy. Religion is carried out continuously by the community and government. However, in line with

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social and curtural dynamics as an impact of development, in fostering religious life, a broad and in- depth study of da'wah is needed.

It can be concluded that Islamic religious extensions are the implementation of the government in special circles or people who have certain competencies in related knowledge. Islamic religion to help foster the spirituality of the community, who have problems living in their environment, so that they get enlightenment and solutions based on Islamic values from Islamic religious extensions recruited by the Government, namely the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia.

The purpose of Islamic religious extension is used as the basis for determining the targets and strategies of extension, operational steps, containing the breadth of the scope of activities, as well as determining and influencing the use of materials, methods and media used. Some of the objectives of Islamic religious extension: a) The ultimate goal, is to call to Allah SWT (increase faith and devotion). b) The general goal, is happiness in this world and in the hereafter. c) The specific goal, is to fill that aspect of life and provide Islamic guidance to integrate with all human life. d) The urgent goal, is to solve and solve the problems that exist in society, namely problems that prevent the realization of the Islamic religion. e) The incidental goal is to resolve and solve problems that occur at any time in society, especially regarding diseases and imbalances in society, for example bribery, extortion and others.

The operational objectives of religious education activities, especially regarding community attitudes and behavior as stated by Purwanto (2012), include: An attitude that is anti starch turns into sympathy. An attitude that doubts turns into confidence. Attitudes that are starting to believe turn into more certainty. Behavior that is lazy and indifferent turns into diligence and enthusiasm both in the implementation of worship, as well as in other mu'amalah activities. From a sense of compulsion turns into awareness and personal conviction as well as a sense of belonging. Behavior that is already diligent is qualitatively improved. Maintaining the attitudes and behaviors that have been produced previously so as not to retreat again (maintaining continuity). Attitudes from initially receiving extension change qualitatively to providing extension.

So the purpose of Islamic religious extension is to call people to believe and fear Allah SWT and operationally there is a change in attitudes and behavior from negative to positive and passive to active in terms of amar ma'ruf nahi munkar so that people have a high awareness of implementing the teachings of Islam in a kaffah manner, for the realization of a complete personality, a harmonious family and a safe, peaceful and prosperous society that is approved by Allah SWT in order to get happiness in this world and the hereafter (Ilham, 2018).

The functions of Islamic religious extensions (Fahrurrozi, 2021) include:

1. Informative and Educative Functions
Islamic religious extensions position themselves as da'i who are obliged to preach Islam, convey religious information and educate the community as well as possible in accordance with the guidance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

2. Consultative Function
Islamic religious extensions provide themselves to participate in thinking about and solving problems faced by the community, whether personal, family or community problems in general. Religious extensions must be willing to open their eyes and ears to the problems faced by the people. Religious extensions become a place to ask and a place to complain for the community to solve and solve problems with their advice. So in that case the religious extension acts as a psychologist, confidant and sharing friend.

3. Advocative Function
Islamic religious extensions have a moral and social responsibility to carry out defense activities against the people or communities they assist against various threats, disturbances, obstacles and challenges that harm faith, disrupt worship and damage morals.
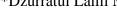
The Islamic Extension Process

In the implementation of the extension process, there are several planning stages that must be carried out by extension workers so that the implementation of activities can achieve goals and achieve success. Karta Sapoetra in (Fadli, 2015) gives an opinion that there are four stages of the extension process, among others:

1. Survey to determine extension program
Extension is not possible without an introduction to the area or object of extension. Because without prior introduction, there will be missteps and unachievement of the extension work program towards the target. The introduction survey includes aspects of: location, target conditions, economic, social, target problems and regional situation. Then the results of the survey are then compiled to become an extension program that is in accordance with the target situation.

2. Preparation of work program
The preparation of the extension program is the result of thinking about something that will be done in the activity in the hope that the extension objectives will be achieved. A good extension work program is made by taking into account and considering the images compiled from conditions and situations, existing problems, and obstacles that will be faced in its implementation later. In

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addition, in the preparation of the extension program, of course, it must be regularly scheduled in the implementation of its activities. With the time, the extension worker has a certain grip in carrying out the types of activities in accordance with the predetermined time, the program to be implemented, the methods to be used, the media to be used in delivering the program and extension material so that the implementation is arranged systematically.

3. Implementation of the work program

The implementation of the work program is the implementation of extension activities whose type and time of activity must not deviate from what has been determined, namely in accordance with what is that have been planned. Therefore, extension workers must be punctual in the implementation of these activities.

4. Evaluation

Evaluation is an assessment or assessment of the results of extension work, whether it creates an impression, awareness, interest in following and implementing the messages summarized and explained in the extension material. With this evaluation, it is expected that the implementation of extension will lead to positive changes in speech, attitude and action.

The aims and objectives of evaluating the results of extension work are:

a. Knowing the things that have been implemented in the type of extension activities in accordance with the program.

b. Knowing what are the weaknesses in the implementation of each type of activity, which methods, attitudes and actions should be improved.

c. Discover new problems that may arise during the implementation of this type of extension activity.

d. Search and find data and information for reports that must be made by extension workers.

Approaches to Islamic Extension

1. Informative approach

The information approach is the process of conveying messages that "tell" or provide explanations to others. This communication can be done orally or in writing. For example, it can be done through notice boards, group meetings, and mass media. Because of its beneficial nature, the extension of the flow that occurs is search (one-way communication). Therefore, the utilization of information and communication technology in socialization activities is usually aimed at communicating a certain tension that is considered

important to be known by the wider community and the public.

2. Persuasion approach

The term "persuasion" in English comes from the Latin persuasion. It literally means "to persuade", "to induce", or "to persuade". The definition of persuasion as "an interpersonal communication process in which the communicator attempts to use symbols to influence the receiver's perceptions, thereby deliberately changing attitudes and activities in accordance with the communicator's wishes". Beliefs contain elements, from some discussions on the boundaries of beliefs, namely: Trying to influence the situation, knowledge, change the attitude of the audience, through verbal and written messages, and done consciously. Therefore, persuasion is a psychological action that is done consciously through the media with the aim of changing attitudes.

3. Coercive approach

Coercive communication is the process of communicating a message from one person to another in a way that involves forcing the person to perform a certain action or activity. Therefore, this communication technique includes sanctions to be imposed if the recipient of the message does not carry it out. This communication may take the form of decrees, instructions, and other

important qualities. That is, it includes obligations that must be obeyed and obligations that must be fulfilled. (Sukmawan, 2012)

Islamic Extension Service Activities

The religious foundation in extension explains that the religious extension as a "helper" who must have an understanding of religious values, and the obligation to practice these values in everyday life. Islamic extensions should realize that providing extension services to clients is an activity that is worth worship, because in the process of providing assistance contained "amar ma'ruf nahi munkar" (bringing good and keeping away evil) so that the services provided are worth worship.

In accordance with the Word of God in QS. Ali Imran verse 104. The meaning: "And let there be a group of people who call to virtue, urge to the ma'ruf and prevent the evil, they are the ones who are worthy." (Q.S Al-Imran: 104)

The Role of Islamic Extension

Since the beginning, religious extensions have acted as guides for the people. With a high degree of responsibility, they brought a safe and prosperous life to the community. Religious extensions are not represented by the community through appointment or election, but automatically become community leaders because of their authority. Religious extensions as religious leaders always guide, nurture and move the community to do good deeds and stay away from prohibited actions, inviting the community to

develop their territory both for the purposes of community facilities and worship.

Religious extensions become a place to ask for people to solve and solve a problem with their advice. Religious extensions as community leaders who act as faith, namely in religious matters and community issues as well as in state issues with efforts to succeed government programs. With his leadership, a religious extension does not only provide information in the form of speech and words only, but together practice and implement what he recommends. They lead the community in carrying out various activities by giving instructions and explanations about what to do, starting it together and completing it together as well. This example covers the activities of daily life, so that people can follow the instructions and invitations of their leaders with full awareness and sincerity.

Thus the task of religious extensions is not only to provide recitation, but all educational activities in the form of guidance and information about various development programs and experiences. The position of religious extention is very strategic to convey religious missions and development missions. In this period of development, the burden and task of Islamic religious ectension need to be further enhanced from various aspects of development through the door and language of religion. Therefore, religious extensions play a role as motivators of development. This role

seems more important because development in Indonesia is not only building humans in terms of spirituality, mental spirituality, which is carried out in line and simultaneously.

The role of religious extension in development is as a motivator by providing information and understanding of the purpose and objectives of development, inviting and moving it to actively participate in the success of development. Religious extensions function as encouragers of the community to actively participate in development and participate in overcoming various obstacles that interfere with the course of development, especially overcoming the negative impact of the development of a very dynamic society. How to deliver religious extension to the community is with simple language, easily understood by the community through a religious approach (Kusnawan, 2011).

Challenges for Religious Extensions

The challenges of religious extensions in carrying out extension that is carried out by various kinds of challenges faced, resulting in extensions having to change their menset, knowledge with the development of today's times. The challenges for religious extensions in the digital age are: a) The changing behavior of society due to the development of science and technology. b) The development of fundamental, radical and liberal Islamic discourse. c) Overcoming the problem of morality and character that is increasingly degenerating.

The target or work area of religious extensions is divided into three, namely the general public, urban communities and special communities. The target area is so wide, with the ideal ratio of the availability of one extension worker in one sub-district. To overcome this problem, a religious extension must master basic competencies and substance competencies. One of the basic competencies is the ability to communicate both orally and in writing (Rahman, 2021).

Opportunities for Religious Extension

In addition to challenges there are also opportunities, actually this is the same thing. However, it depends on the perspective and mindset of a person with something. With the existence of challenges as well as being an opportunity to be the best, so that extension can achieve targets well.

The opportunities for religious extensions in the digital age are:

1. Technological advances allow people to access information easily anytime and anywhere. This makes it easy for religious extensions to broadcast understanding and extension to consumers at large.
2. Indonesia's population reached 270,203,917 people (data from the Central Statistics Agency in 2020). Making Indonesia the fourth most populous country in the world. The country with the largest Muslim population in

the world which reaches 230 million people. This is the target group for the work of religious extensions who are assets in the world-afterlife.

People's behavior and lifestyles are increasingly changing and developing and do not know the place and time that causes digitalization, so it is easily accepted by the world community. People can easily do anything, anywhere, and a n y t i m e , in accessing the internet, including religious extension. Currently, people's needs for digital devices are not only about clothing, food, and shelter (Rahman, 2021).

Challenges for the Islamic Extension Profession in the Digital Age

The number of complex problems is increasingly challenging to make challenges for Islamic religious extensions that are not light anymore, Islamic religious extensions are faced with various changes experienced by Islamic society and Islamic religious extensions human life in general. Individuals today learning Islam no longer make ulama or a teacher the intended authority. Rather, anywhere, anytime, and in various ways people can learn Islam. People can utilize radio, television, newspapers, cell phones, books, magazines, and the internet as a source of gaining religious knowledge. Not necessarily relying on scholars as a religious source. Even the internet has become a medium that is so easy, practical in knowing various religious issues, from light problems to

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complicated issues around worship, all so easy to know and understand. But keep in mind that ulama or teachers are sources that must be maintained to take religious knowledge.

Many challenges faced by religious educators are related to the morality of a person and the morality of the country. Various cases of morality occur in this country day by day concerning. Among them are corruption, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, free sex in teenagers, and environmental damage. Corruption is a major problem that has damaged the success of national development. Corruption results in high economic costs, unhealthy politics and morality that continues to decline (Basit, 2014).

Therefore, it states that this country is morally critical and requires serious action. From that reason, the need for participation from several parties to overcome the country's problems. One of them is from Islamic religious extensions. The extensions need to work hard, professionally intelligent in dealing with the various challenges that exist now, as explained above. So some Islamic religious extensions must stabilize and get high support from the community and government.

Therefore, with the rapid surge in technology and the amount of internet access by the community, and the ease with which people use digital, it is no longer surprising that doing activities now is not only done face-to-face, but can be done using digital. One of them is

when conducting extension activities, extension by accessing digital is a great opportunity for extension workers, extension workers can carry out their extension activities by uploading content or making videos which are then published or shared via YouTube, TikTok, Instagram and other applications. However, with these opportunities, there are challenges that must be accepted by extension workers where extension workers must master digital knowledge to make the content of the extension carried out attract the attention of the community.
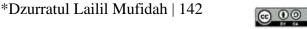
CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Religious extension is said to be part of da'wah, which is the process of conveying Islamic teachings from someone who is competent in their field to provide guidance and extension in the form of training as well as empowerment to citizens at large. Likewise, in today's digital age, the religious extension profession easily uses digital opportunities, one of which is social media. Even though there are opportunities there are also challenges for the profession of religious extensions, where religious extensions must master knowledge and competence to attract public attention.

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