EMPOWERING RELIGIOUS COUNSELORS AS AGENTS OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN THE INDONESIAN MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

Hesti Kusumaningrum*, Rubiyanah, Indah Fadhilla

Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University of Jakarta, Indonesia

E-mail: hesti.kusumaningrum@uinjkt.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to analyze how a training model strengthens the competence of religious counselors in spreading the value of religious moderation. This research uses a qualitative approach of case study type by collecting data through in-depth interviews, observations, and literature studies. The research participants consisted of Religious Counselors working in various regions in Indonesia who participated in the education and training program for religious moderation activists conducted by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs training center. The results showed that Religious Counselors need to increase their understanding of the principles of religious moderation, practical communication skills, and conflict-handling strategies. In addition, the training model can strengthen the competencies of religious counselors in disseminating the value of religious moderation and conducting their duties as religious counselors. This training model uses an andragogy learning approach with group discussions, case studies, simulations, and team-based training methods. The training materials such as interfaith dialogue, the concept of religious moderation, religious diversity, religious tolerance, and conflict management can strengthen the understanding of Religious Counselors about pluralism and religious moderation, communication skills, and building interfaith cooperation. After attending this training, the counselors became more confident in carrying out their duties and more prepared to deal with religion-driven social conflicts in the community. Furthermore, they can develop digital media learning on religious moderation through social media.

Keywords: religious moderation; religious counselors; training model; MORA

Abstrak

Makalah ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana model pelatihan untuk memperkuat kompetensi Penyuluh Agama dalam menyebarkan nilai moderasi agama. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif tipe studi kasus dengan mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan studi literatur. Partisipan penelitian terdiri dari Penyuluh Agama yang bekerja di berbagai wilayah di Indonesia yang mengikuti program pendidikan dan pelatihan untuk aktivis moderasi agama yang diselenggarakan oleh pusat pelatihan Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Penyuluh Agama perlu meningkatkan pemahaman mereka tentang prinsip-prinsip moderasi agama, keterampilan komunikasi efektif, dan strategi penanganan konflik. Selain itu, model pelatihan dapat memperkuat kompetensi Penyuluh Agama dalam menyebarkan nilai moderasi agama dalam menjalankan tugas mereka sebagai Penyuluh Agama. Model pelatihan ini menggunakan pendekatan pembelajaran andragogi dengan metode diskusi kelompok, studi kasus, simulasi, dan pelatihan berbasis tim. Materi pelatihan seperti dialog lintas agama, konsep moderasi agama, keragaman agama, toleransi beragama, dan manajemen konflik mampu memperkuat pemahaman Penyuluh Agama tentang pluralisme dan moderasi agama, keterampilan komunikasi, dan membangun kerjasama lintas agama. Setelah mengikuti pelatihan ini, Penyuluh menjadi lebih percaya diri dalam menjalankan tugas mereka, lebih siap dalam menghadapi konflik sosial keagamaan di masyarakat. Selain itu, mereka dapat mengembangkan pembelajaran media digital dengan tema moderasi agama melalui media sosial.

Kata kunci: moderasi agama; Penyuluh agama; model pelatihan; Kementerian Agama RI

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*Corresponding author

Introduction

Indonesia, as a pluralistic country, has two critical modalities that shape its character, namely democracy and local wisdom, which are values believed and understood to maintain religious harmony. Islam is indeed the religion of the majority of Indonesia's population; however, in certain areas, there are also Christians, Catholics, Hindus, Buddhists, and Confucianists who are the majority religion. The diversity of religious existence is a mosaic that enriches the treasures of religious life in Indonesia. On the other hand, if this diversity is not correctly maintained, it will contain potential threats to the unity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI).

A series of religious violence as a result of this extreme religious understanding has taken place in Indonesia. In May 2018, in East Java, there were several suicide bombings at churches, flats, and police stations. In carrying out these suicide bombings, the perpetrators were not alone but involved their families, such as children and wives (BBC Indonesia, 2018). This highlighted the public's attention due to the involvement of underage children who were unaware of the actions taken by their parents. Seeing this condition, it is essential to provide an understanding of religious tolerance in a family. One way to provide an understanding of religious tolerance is through strengthening diversity education in educational institutions and community leaders (Center for Humanitarian and Development Studies, 2020).

For the past four years, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has offered solutions to organize a peaceful religious life through the vision of religious moderation, which former Minister of Religious Affairs Lukman Hakim Saifuddin echoed. To affirm this commitment, Saifuddin has proclaimed 2019 as the year of religious moderation by making the spirit of religious moderation the spirit and keyword that animates all religious and religious service programs carried out, especially throughout 2019. In general, religious moderation is a creative effort to develop diversity attitudes from various tensions, such as between absolute truth claims and subjectivity, between radicalism and secularism (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2019).

For the main issues in each religion, each religious adherent must be firm in their beliefs, believing in the truth absolutely and fundamentally. Religious moderation does not mean a compromise to exchange beliefs but rather mutual respect for religious interpretations and practices, looking for the common ground of religious teachings rather than debating the differences. Religious moderation is closely related to tolerance because tolerance is the willingness and ability to respect and appreciate the differences on the other side. In religion, the willingness to accept differences does not mean disturbing, reducing, or eliminating the principal beliefs of religious teachings. Religion teaches that each adherent is willing to respect and appreciate differences in faith or beliefs on the other side.

The implementation of religious broadcasting must be carried out in the spirit of harmony, tolerance, mutual respect, and mutual respect between fellow religious communities, and it must be based on respect for the rights and freedom of a person to embrace and worship according to his religion. In the Joint Decree (Minister of Religious Affairs and Minister of Home Affairs) No. 1/1979, it is stated, "Religious broadcasting is all activities whose form, nature and purpose are to disseminate the teachings of a religion," therefore religious broadcasting must be carried out with good ethics and morals.

In implementing religious broadcasting, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has functional personnel assigned to conduct guidance and counseling in each sub-district area throughout Indonesia, namely, Religious Counselors. The functional Position of Religious Counselor is a position that has the scope, duties, responsibilities, authority, and full rights to carry out religious guidance or counseling and the development of religious development guidance or counseling (Regulation of the Minister of Administrative Reform and Bureaucratic Reform Number 9 of 2021).

Functional personnel of religious counselors have a strategic role in strengthening the community's religious life and fostering the quality of religious spirituality among religious people in understanding the values of religious teachings. Empowerment of Religious Counselors of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is urgent in building, maintaining, and empowering religious people for harmony and tolerance within religious communities, between religious communities, and between religious communities and the government. Religious Counselors are positioned as functional technical implementers of religious guidance or counseling and development to the community at the Supervisory Agency. The function of Religious Counselors is informative, educative, consultative, and advocative. This aligns with the main task of Religious Counselors, which is to carry out and develop religious guidance and counseling activities and development through religious language.

In line with the edict of the former Minister of Religious Affairs Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, 2019 on religious moderation, the Center for Education and Training of Technical Education and Religious Personnel at the Research Development and Training Education Agency at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia held training to strengthen religious moderation for Religious Counselors Batch I and II, June 14-19, 2022. This activity was carried out to increase the competence of Religious Counselors in strengthening religious moderation. The training to strengthen religious moderation for Religious Counselors was held for six days with 52 hours of lessons. The training participants were religious counselors from five religions throughout Indonesia: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, who were delegates from the Provincial Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

In simple terms, religious moderation is an attitude and behavior that always takes a position in the middle (wasathiyah), acts fairly, and is not extreme in religious practice. So, every citizen of a religious community, regardless of tribe, ethnicity, culture, religion, and political choice, must listen to each other and learn to train each other to manage and overcome their differences. Religious moderation is a moderate way of looking at religion, namely understanding and practicing religious teachings without extremes, either right or left. Extremism, radicalism, hate speech, and fractured inter-religious relations are problems faced by the Indonesian people today. Religious moderation has four indicators: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and respect for tradition.

Religious moderation is the glue between religious fervor and national commitment. In Indonesia, religion is essentially Indonesian, and Indonesian is essentially religion. Imam Syafei asserts that religious moderation is a means of realizing the benefits of a harmonious, peaceful, and tolerant religious and national life. Religious moderation is also the key to creating tolerance and harmony at the local, national, and global levels.

Research on religious moderation is still relatively new and has not been widely studied in scientific studies (Subchi, et al., 2022; Bakar, et al., 2023; Hasan and Juhannis, 2024). Research on religious moderation that has been conducted looks at implementing the value of religious moderation for the younger generation in schools and universities (Mustakim, et al., 2021; Burga, et al., 2022; Afwadzi, et al., 2023; Ikawati, et al., 2023; Rusyana, et al., 2023; Wardi, et al., 2023; Mukhibat, et al., 2024). There has never been any research that looks at strengthening religious moderation by religious Counselors of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

Strengthening Religious Moderation for Religious Counselors in the Form of Religious Moderation Strengthening Activator Training is organized by the Center for Education and Training of Technical Education and Religious Personnel at the Research Development and Training Education Agency at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia because, in today's society, some people are too extreme in understanding one interpretation of the holy verse. In contrast, any other interpretation that is different is considered wrong, heretical, and infidel. Some overinterpret the contents of the holy book to the point that they cannot distinguish between God's verses and those not. Some play God's messages into personal messages full of interest. These intersections are prone to creating conflicts that can tear apart the harmony of life together, especially now that religious issues will be ignited more quickly due to the influence of digital technology.

In practice, religious moderation has several weaknesses, namely, the development of excessive, excessive, and extreme religious understanding and practice, which contradicts the essence of religious teachings. Second, the emergence of truth claims over religious interpretations. According to him, some people feel that their understanding of religious interpretation is the most correct, then force other people who are different to follow their understanding, even if necessary, by using coercion and violence. Third, an understanding that undermines, threatens, or damages the bonds of nationhood (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2021).

To answer this challenge, empowering religious counselors as agents of religious moderation through Religious Moderation Activist Training at the Religious Education and Training Center in the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs needs to be carried out to see the extent of Religious Counselors' understanding of religious moderation and its implications and implementation after attending the training.

Religious moderation is a priority program of the Ministry of Religious Affairs as a middle way to strengthen tolerance, harmony, and social harmony. Religious moderation is also part of the priority programs in the Technocratic Draft of the 2020-2024 RPJMN that must be implemented in the life of the nation and state. To strengthen religious moderation, the government issued a Presidential Regulation in 2023 (Presidential Regulation, 2023). This Presidential Regulation regulates the implementation of strengthening Religious Moderation, which is then reduced to the Guidelines for the Implementation of Strengthening Religious Moderation for Civil Servants within the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Decree of the Minister of Religion Number 93 of 2022).

In its implementation, the Ministry of Religious Affairs needs to get input on the program's sustainability, from reporting achievements, challenges, and obstacles encountered in the field. Therefore, this research will contribute to this by analyzing the training model for strengthening the competence of religious Counselors in Indonesia in preaching the values of religious moderation in society.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design, combining a qualitative survey approach with the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method. The IPA approach was chosen to investigate religious counselors' lived experiences and perceptions regarding implementing the religious moderation model. This methodological framework allows for a deeper understanding, analysis, and explanation of how the model for strengthening religious moderation is operationalized at the Center for Education and Training of Technical Education and Religious Personnel at the Research Development and Training Education Agency under the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with religious counselors involved in the program and participatory observation to understand the implementation context directly. The collected qualitative data were analyzed using the IPA approach, where the analysis process involved identifying thematic patterns in participants' narratives, grouping findings based on emerging themes, and interpreting the significance of these findings in the context of strengthening religious moderation.

This research took data from nine participants using direct interviews with one instructor and 8 of the 60 training participants. Research data analysis is carried out by collecting data based on questions or problems that have been formulated, then data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

The role of the researcher in this study was as the primary instrument in data collection and interpretation of findings. Steps to minimize bias and subjectivity were taken through constant reflection, memoing, and team discussions. Additionally, the theoretical framework supporting this research includes theories of religious moderation, understanding of local culture, and the qualitative approach paradigm in social sciences.

Limitations of this study include constraints in generalizing findings only to the researched context and the potential bias that may arise from the researcher's subjective position in conducting the analysis. However, efforts have been made to address these limitations through data triangulation, rich participant narratives, and careful reflection on the research context.

Results and Discussion

Training Model for Religious Moderation

Trainees' level of understanding of the principles of religious moderation. In this context, the religious moderation material taught in the training can cover several important aspects, including: 1) **Understanding of religious moderation**: The training began by providing a

comprehensive understanding of the meaning and concept of religious moderation. Participants were explained the importance of moderation in building harmony, tolerance, and interfaith harmony. They were also taught about the positive implications of moderation in daily life; 2) **Knowledge of religion and diversity**: Trainees are given an in-depth understanding of the religious principles that promote religious moderation. They learned universal values in different religions and how to apply them in multicultural life. The aim is to develop a broader understanding of religious and cultural diversity in Indonesia; 3) **Interfaith dialog**: The training also involved interfaith dialog activities. Participants are taught effective and ethical communication skills in establishing dialog with people of other religions. They are allowed to understand other religions' views, find commonality, and resolve differences peacefully and respectfully; 4) **Tolerance and respect for differences**: One of the main focuses of the training materials was to develop an attitude of tolerance and respect for differences. Participants are engaged in discussions on human rights, religious freedom, and respecting plurality in society. They are taught to avoid discrimination, stereotyping, and prejudice that may arise in the context of religion and belief; 5) **Conflict management**: The training also included material on conflict management. Participants are taught strategies and skills useful in managing conflicts that may arise regarding religious diversity. They learned how to peacefully deal with differences of opinion, seek joint solutions, and build reconciliation among conflicting groups.

In addition to the materials mentioned above, the training may involve practical activities, such as case studies, role plays, and scenario-based exercises to hone participants' skills in practicing religious moderation. An effective training model is needed to increase understanding and practice of religious moderation in religious counseling in the community to build interfaith harmony and overcome religious conflict. One model that has been successfully implemented is the Religious Moderation Counselors Training, which aims to equip religious extension workers with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that promote interfaith harmony and tolerance.

Implementation of Religious Moderation

The training was conducted through class sessions, workshops, and other practical activities. The training materials are delivered by facilitators who deeply understand religious moderation. Participants were invited to participate in discussions, role plays, simulations, and practical exercises to improve their understanding and skills in religious moderation.

In the implementation of this training, the participants were given materials that had been designed by the Center for Education and Training of Technical Education and Religious Personnel at the Research Development and Training Education Agency at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia as the basic curriculum for the trainees, including:

Pre-Test

The pre-test is an initial assessment or evaluation conducted before the religious moderation training is implemented. The pre-test aims By conducting a pre-test, the instructor or facilitator can understand the participants' initial level of understanding about religious moderation and get an idea of the areas that need to be improved during the training.

The pre-test in religious moderation training usually contains questions or tasks that test participants' knowledge of religious moderation, managing religious differences, and interfaith communication skills. The pre-test results can provide an initial picture of the participants' understanding so that the instructor can adjust the materials and learning approach during the training according to the participants' needs.

By conducting a pre-test, trainers can assess the extent to which participants understand religious moderation before attending the training. This will help the trainer adjust the training content, emphasize areas that need improvement, and design learning methods that match the participants' initial level of understanding. The pre-test also provides a reference for conducting a post-training evaluation and comparing the progress made by participants after the training.

Overall, the pre-test in the religious moderation training provided preliminary information on participants' understanding and helped the instructor design a practical training that meets the needs of the participants.

Introductions and Building Learning Commitment (BLC)

Introductions and Building Learning Commitment (BLC) are two important components of religious moderation training. Introductions serve as the initial stage of the training, where participants are introduced to each other, build bonds, and create an inclusive environment. This includes introducing the objectives of the training, clarifying participants' expectations, and explaining the importance of religious moderation in the context of religious outreach.

Furthermore, Building Learning Commitment (BLC) is a process of building participants' commitment to the learning that will take place. Participants are invited to understand the importance of developing understanding and skills in religious moderation and applying this concept in their practice as religious educators. BLC involves participants committing to actively engaging in the training, sharing experiences, and collaborating with fellow participants.

Introductions and BLCs are important steps to create a conducive climate for religious moderation training. Through introductions, participants can get to know each other and create good relationships. In contrast, the BLC helps ensure that participants are strongly committed to actively participating in the learning process and applying what they learn in their daily practice as religious educators.

With a combination of good introductions and building a strong commitment to learning, religious moderation training can create an inclusive environment, facilitate collaboration, and encourage active participation from participants. This will increase the effectiveness of the training and strengthen participants' ability to practice religious moderation in religious outreach in the community.

Udar Assumptions, Building Perspectives

Religious reasoning is the ability of individuals to think critically and objectively in understanding and building perspectives on religious issues. In religious moderation training, religious reasoning is important because it involves a deep understanding of different religions and building an inclusive and tolerant attitude towards differences.

Assumption scrubbing is a critical process of evaluating and testing the assumptions that underlie our understanding of religion. Religious moderation training involves identifying and addressing stereotypical thinking, prejudice, and discrimination concerning other religions. This involves personal introspection, reflection, and the renewal of a more inclusive mindset.

Perspective building in religious moderation training means being open to understanding and appreciating different points of view. Trainees are invited to see religion more comprehensively, deepening their understanding of other religions' principles and values. By building a more diverse perspective, trainees can develop a more inclusive attitude, mutual understanding, and cooperation in carrying out their duties as religious educators.

Overall, reasoning about religion, airing assumptions, and building perspectives are essential to religious moderation training. They play a crucial role in shaping a more inclusive and tolerant understanding of religious differences, thus promoting interfaith harmony in society;

Sketches of   Religious Life in Indonesia

The material in this religious moderation training aims to increase participants' understanding of religious diversity in Indonesia and how to live a religious life with tolerance and mutual respect. The training involves discussion, reflection, and interaction between participants to build a deep understanding of the importance of religious moderation.

Training participants were invited to reflect on the religious diversity that exists in Indonesia, including different traditions, worship practices, and beliefs. They were allowed to share their personal experiences and perspectives on religious diversity daily.

During the training, participants were also provided information on the theoretical basis of religious moderation, effective communication strategies, and the importance of respecting religious differences. Group discussions and role plays were used to explore more profound understanding and encourage participants' reflection on the importance of inclusiveness and mutual respect in religion.

The training also provided insights into interfaith harmony in Indonesia and the efforts made by the government and society to promote religious moderation. Participants were encouraged to devise practical strategies for implementing religious moderation in their daily lives as individuals and as religious educators.

Through this training, participants are expected to understand the importance of religious moderation and strengthen attitudes of tolerance, mutual respect, and interfaith harmony in Indonesia. They are expected to apply the lessons learned in their religious lives and become agents of change who promote religious moderation in society;

Social Analysis with Iceberg and U Process Analysis Tools

Reasoning about Religion: Social Analysis with Iceberg and U Process Analysis Tools is the material used in religious moderation training. It aims to deeply analyze the social, cultural, and contextual factors influencing one's religiousness. It uses the iceberg analysis tool to identify visible factors (such as religious beliefs and practices) and hidden factors (such as social norms and cultural values) in religiousness.

It also involves the U-process, a collaborative approach to designing inclusive and sustainable solutions to promote religious moderation. The U-process involves the active participation of trainees in identifying problems, exploring a deeper understanding of diversity, and designing strategies and actions that can enhance interfaith harmony.

In the religious moderation training, the material Reasoning about Religion with the Iceberg and U Process Analysis Tool provides a comprehensive understanding of the social factors influencing religiosity. With this material in the training, trainees can better understand the social and cultural contexts that influence people's religious understanding and practice. This enables them to develop more effective strategies for promoting interfaith dialog, tolerance, and harmony in the community;

Nine Keywords of Religious Moderation

The Ministry of Religious Moderation concept is the approach adopted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in promoting religious moderation in society. The concept emphasizes the importance of managing religious differences in a balanced, inclusive, and tolerant manner. It also focuses on strengthening moderate religious understanding, enhancing interfaith dialogue, and building harmony.

The nine keywords of religious moderation that can be the focus of religious moderation training are understanding and promoting a deep understanding of moderate religious teachings and values. Tolerance: Promote an attitude of tolerance towards different religions and beliefs. Dialogue: Encourage open dialog and mutual listening between adherents of different religions. Equality: Respect for every individual and religion without discrimination. Inclusivity: Building an inclusive environment for all religions and beliefs. Harmony: Promote harmonious relations between religious communities. Managing conflict: Learn strategies and skills to manage religious conflict peacefully and constructively. Education: Educating the public about religious moderation and the importance of interfaith harmony. Real action: Encourage the implementation of the concept of religious moderation in daily practice, including in religious counseling and social interaction. In the religious moderation training, these nine keywords focus on providing a comprehensive understanding of the skills needed to promote religious moderation and build interfaith harmony in society.

Self-Attitude of Civil Servants of the Ministry of Religion

Internalization of Religious Moderation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is a process of appreciation and application of the concept of religious moderation by the civil servants of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia through organized training. This training aims to change the CIVIL SERRVANTS's attitude to be more inclusive, tolerant, and able to maintain interfaith harmony in carrying out their duties and responsibilities in the work environment.

In this training, the civil servants of the Ministry of Religious Affairs were invited to understand the values of religious moderation, such as respecting differences in beliefs, avoiding extreme attitudes, and building constructive dialogue. They were also trained to recognize stereotypes and prejudices that may arise in interacting with people of other religions.

During the training, participants were invited to self-reflect and introspect on their attitudes and behaviors related to religious moderation. They were given a deep understanding of the importance of maintaining harmony and equality in their duties as public servants in the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

The trainees were allowed to share their experiences, challenges, and thoughts related to religious moderation through interaction, discussion, and simulation. This aims to broaden their perspectives and understanding of practicing religious moderation in various work situations. It is hoped that through this training, the CIVIL SERRVANTS attitude of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia will be transformed to be more inclusive, respectful, and able to maintain interfaith harmony. The internalization of religious moderation in the CIVIL SERRVANTS's self-attitude is expected to positively contribute to building a harmonious, peaceful, and tolerant society in religion.

Ecosystem for Strengthening Religious Moderation

The Ministry of Religious Affairs' Internalization of Religious Moderation is a process in which the concepts and values of religious moderation are applied and harmonized in the religious moderation training ecosystem. In this training, the Ministry of Religious Affairs creates an environment that supports strengthening religious moderation through various steps. First, the training materials were carefully developed to strengthen the understanding of religious moderation. The materials include moderation values, managing religious differences, and interfaith communication skills. Second, competent and experienced training facilitators were selected to deliver the materials well. They have a deep understanding of religious moderation and can inspire the trainees. Third, interactive and participatory learning methods were used to involve participants actively. Group discussions, role plays, and simulations were conducted to strengthen participants' understanding and improve their skills in religious moderation. Fourth, the training is complemented by practical field activities, such as visits to different places of worship, interfaith dialogues, or interfaith partnership activities. This aims to give participants hands-on experience in dealing with real situations and strengthen their skills in promoting religious moderation. Fifth, training evaluations are conducted to measure the effectiveness of the training and

evaluate changes in participants' understanding and attitudes. It helps identify strengths and weaknesses in the training and provides important input for future program improvement and development. By internalizing religious moderation through this training, the Ministry of Religious Affairs creates an ecosystem for strengthening religious moderation that supports and facilitates inclusive, harmonious, and respectful religious outreach in society.

U Process

The Religious Moderation Strengthening Strategy is used in religious moderation training to strengthen participants' understanding and skills in practicing religious moderation. One of the strategies used in the training process is the "U Process."

Process U is a learning approach that involves structured stages to create a deeper understanding and transformation of participants' attitudes. This strategy includes the following steps. First, Observation and Introduction: Participants are introduced to the concept of religious moderation, its associated values, and the importance of religious moderation in society. They are invited to observe and understand the surrounding conditions, including challenges and opportunities in implementing religious moderation. Second, Engagement and Exploration: Participants were encouraged to engage in group discussions and interactions actively. They share their experiences, views, and understanding of religious moderation. Through this exploration, participants can broaden their perspectives and build connections with other participants. Third, Reflection and Deep Understanding: Participants can reflect on their experiences, analyze their understanding of religious moderation, and identify mindsets and prejudices that may have influenced their attitudes. They are also invited to understand the implications of religious moderation in their daily lives. Fourth, Innovation and Implementation: Participants are encouraged to think creatively and develop innovative ideas to promote religious moderation in their neighborhoods. They are invited to plan concrete actions that they can implement after the training. Fifth, Evaluation and Further Reflection: Participants are invited to evaluate the results of implementing their actions and reflect on the changes in their understanding, attitudes, and practices related to religious moderation. They are also allowed to share their experiences and learn from each other. By using this "U Process" strategy, the religious moderation training can change participants' understanding and attitudes regarding religious moderation. Through this structured approach, participants are expected to internalize the values of religious moderation and apply the concept in daily practice, both in religious counseling and in interaction with the community.

Building a Movement with Pioneering

Strategy for Strengthening Religious Moderation: Building Movements with Leadership is used in religious moderation training to strengthen the understanding and practice of religious moderation. The strategy focuses on building a movement involving leadership in promoting religious moderation values in society. In brief, the strategy involves leadership formation. In this training, leadership groups consist of participants who are highly committed to and interested in religious moderation. They are trained and encouraged to become leaders who promote the values of religious moderation in their communities.

Second, Education and Understanding: Participants are given a deep understanding of religious moderation, including the importance of mutual respect, dialogue, and tolerance in religious practice. They are taught to understand religious differences by appreciating and respecting such diversity. Third, Skill Development: Participants are trained in effective communication skills, such as active listening, speaking with empathy, and building harmonious relationships. They are also trained in negotiation and conflict resolution skills to constructively overcome religious differences. Fourth, Action and Implementation: Participants are encouraged to implement their learning in daily practice. They are invited to practice religious moderation in religious counseling, organizing interfaith discussions, and becoming agents of change in building interfaith harmony in the community. Fifth, Networking and Collaboration: Participants are encouraged to network and collaborate with other religious educators and religious leaders. This collaboration strengthens the religious moderation movement, expands the reach of influence, and increases effectiveness in promoting religious moderation. With strong leadership and active involvement of participants in concrete actions, this training can positively impact building interfaith harmony and overcoming religious conflicts in the community.

Conflict Resolution

Strategy for Strengthening Religious Moderation: Conflict Resolution is a material used in religious moderation training to assist participants in addressing conflicts arising in religious contexts and promoting peace and harmony. The strategy involves the following steps: First, Understanding Conflict: Trainees were given an in-depth understanding of the nature of conflict in religious contexts, its causes, and its impact on interfaith relations. Second, Empathy and Respectful Perspective: Participants are taught to practice empathy and a respectful perspective in understanding the viewpoints and interests of other parties involved in the conflict. Third, Effective Communication: Participants are trained in effective communication skills, including active listening, expressing opinions clearly, and seeking solutions through open dialog and mutual respect. Fourth, Mediation and Negotiation: Participants are provided with knowledge and skills in mediation and negotiation to help facilitate constructive dialog between parties involved in religious conflict. Fifth, Conflict Resolution Based on Moderation Principles: Participants are taught to seek conflict solutions based on the principles of religious moderation, such as respect for human rights, tolerance, justice, and respectful dialogue. Six, Building Harmonious Relationships: Participants can build harmonious relationships with other trainees through collaborative and cooperative activities that promote mutual understanding and harmony. Seventh, Strategy for Strengthening Religious Moderation: Conflict Resolution empowers trainees to address religious conflicts constructively, develop practical communication skills, and promote interfaith harmony. By applying this strategy, trainees are expected to become agents of peace and moderation in a religiously diverse society;

Reflection, Evaluation, and Action Plan

Strategy for Strengthening Religious Moderation: Reflection, Evaluation, and Action Plan is used in religious moderation training to strengthen the understanding and practice of religious moderation. The strategy involves three important stages: reflection, evaluation,

and action plan. First, the reflection phase involved the trainees critically reflecting on their understanding and attitudes regarding religious moderation. Participants were asked to consider their own experiences, views, and beliefs in the context of religious moderation. This stage aims to build self-awareness and identify potential changes needed. Second, the evaluation phase involves assessing the effectiveness of the training in achieving the goal of religious moderation. Trainees provide feedback on the success of the training, strengths and weaknesses, and aspects that need improvement. This evaluation can be conducted through questionnaires, interviews, or group discussions. The results of the evaluation help in understanding the impact of the training and identifying areas of improvement. Third, the action plan stage involves participants formulating concrete steps to implement religious moderation in their daily practices. Participants can develop strategies and actions to implement in their communities or workplaces. The action plan includes practical steps to promote interfaith dialogue, tolerance, and harmony. Strategies for Strengthening Religious Moderation: Reflection, Evaluation, and Action Plan provides a comprehensive framework for strengthening religious moderation through training. By encouraging participants to reflect on their understanding, evaluate the effectiveness of the training, and plan concrete actions, the strategy aims to create positive changes in religious attitudes, practices, and interactions.

Post-Test

Post-test in religious moderation training is an evaluation stage conducted after the trainees have completed the training program. The purpose of the post-test is to measure the extent to which participants have gained knowledge, skills, and attitude changes after attending religious moderation training.

Through the post-test, it can be identified to what extent the participants have internalized and applied the learning from the training in religious moderation. The post-test results will provide an overview of the success rate of the training and help in evaluating the effectiveness of the training program. By analyzing the post-test results, training organizers can identify participants' strengths and weaknesses in religious moderation understanding and skills. This information can be used to provide feedback to participants and design appropriate continuous development strategies to improve their understanding and skills in religious moderation.

Overall, the post-test on religious moderation training provides an overview of how participants have achieved the training objectives and provides important information for developing future training programs. In formulating this material, the training organizers referred to the Religious Moderation book from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Guidelines for Implementing Strengthening Religious Moderation. Of all the materials described, the U Theory material is the most challenging because it requires the instructor's sensitivity to understand the phenomena around him. This becomes difficult because each participant has different problems in each place. From understanding what is happening, recognizing trends, exploring causes, understanding the paradigms of the surrounding community, finding solutions, and involving the right parties.

Strategies, Methods, and Media Training for Religious Moderation Counselors

Strategies Training

The training strategies used may vary depending on the objectives of the training, the needs of the participants, and the context of the training. However, the following are common strategies often used in training. Effective training begins with thoroughly identifying training needs, which entails analyzing skill gaps and aligning individual and organizational objectives. Once these needs are clarified, employing diverse teaching methods, ranging from lectures to practical exercises and e-learning enriches the learning experience and enhances comprehension. Action-based training further reinforces theoretical knowledge by immersing participants in tasks relevant to their roles, fostering practical application and problem-solving skills. Additionally, integrating brainstorming sessions cultivates creativity and innovation, facilitating idea generation and problem-solving within team settings or planning sessions. By incorporating these strategies, training programs can effectively address diverse learning needs while promoting active engagement and skill development.

Methods Training

Training methods are approaches or techniques used in the training process to achieve learning objectives. The training methods may vary depending on the training's context, objectives, and needs. Here are some standard training methods often used: First, Lecture and Presentation: This method involves the delivery of information by an instructor to trainees through lectures or presentations. The instructor will provide explanations, examples, and illustrations to clarify the training material for the participants. Group Discussion: This method involves trainees interacting to share their opinions, experiences, and understanding of the training topic. Group discussions allow participants to learn from each other and engage them actively in the learning process. Second, Case Study: This method involves analyzing and solving problems by applying learned concepts and principles in real or hypothetical situations. Trainees can apply their knowledge in a relevant context and develop problem-solving skills. Third, Simulation: This method uses tools or environments that simulate real situations to train participants.

Examples include role plays, computer simulations, or specialized equipment. Participants can practice and develop their skills in a safe and controlled environment.

Practical Training: This method involves hands-on practice and repetition of skills or tasks learned in training. Participants are allowed to apply their knowledge and skills directly under the supervision of an instructor or through independent tasks.

Project-Based Training: This method involves assigning trainees to work on real projects relevant to the training objectives. Participants will learn while engaging in the project, facing real challenges, and developing practical skills.

Team-Based Training: This method involves working in teams to achieve training objectives. Participants will work together on group tasks, collaborate, and build communication and teamwork skills;

Media Training

In training, different media types can convey information, facilitate learning, and reinforce trainees' understanding. Here are some standard media used in training: First, Presentation media: Presentation media includes PowerPoint slides, web-based presentations, or other audio-visual materials. They are used to convey information with the help of visuals and sound. Presentations can include text, images, graphics, videos, or animations to explain complex concepts and make training materials more exciting and easier to understand. Second, Video media: Training videos can be used to illustrate concepts, show examples, or demonstrate skills. Videos can be recordings of previous training, simulations of real-life situations, or animations summarizing complex concepts. Video media can make training materials more interesting and more accessible for trainees to understand. Third, simulation media creates situations similar to the real world to practice skills and decision-making. Simulations can be role-playing games, specialized software, or virtual environments. In training that requires practical experience, simulation media helps participants practice their skills without real risk. Fourth, Interactive media: Interactive media includes computer applications and digital games. These media allow trainees to actively participate in learning, test their knowledge, and receive instant feedback. This interactivity can increase trainee engagement and improve information retention.

Conclusion

Based on the research titled "Empowering Religious Counselors as Agents of Religious Moderation in Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs," several significant conclusions emerge. Firstly, the Religious Moderation Activist Training proves highly effective in enhancing the understanding, skills, and attitudes of religious Counselors regarding religious moderation. This training significantly deepens their grasp of moderation principles, underscores the importance of respecting religious differences, and equips them with the ability to foster tolerance and harmony among diverse religious communities. Secondly, the training model demonstrates a remarkable capacity to instill behavioral changes in religious Counselors, particularly in applying religious moderation principles during counseling sessions. Participants are strongly motivated to integrate these principles into their daily practices, indicating a substantial shift in their approach. Thirdly, the Training to Promote Religious Moderation positively influences the quality of religious education provided by the Counselors. They are better equipped to effectively convey moderation messages, facilitate constructive dialogues, and promote tolerance and harmony within society. Considering the importance of this program, we suggest that the Ministry of Religious Affairs expand the reach of participants, involving religious counselors from the provincial level and religious counselors from the sub-district. In addition, the Ministry of Religious Affairs must evaluate their role in implementing their skills or knowledge for a particular period. For future research, it is recommended to delve deeper into the long-term impact and sustainability of the training model. Further investigation could also explore the broader societal implications of the training, including its potential to reduce religious conflicts and enhance social cohesion.

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