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Implementation of the Religious Moderation Program in Developing Attitudes of Tolerance in The Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of Semarang Regency

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Abstract

Indonesia, as a multicultural country, requires effective strategies to maintain social harmony and interreligious unity. The diversity that exists in Indonesia is reflected in six officially recognized religions within society, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Among these six, Indonesia is known as a nation that upholds the values of tolerance and diversity. With the motto "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" (Unity in Diversity), Indonesia exemplifies how differences in beliefs can coexist in harmony. The Ministry of Religious Affairs plays a significant role in maintaining harmony in religious life within a pluralistic society. One of its policy directions is the promotion of **religious moderation**. Religious moderation is a perspective, attitude, and practice of religion that takes a middle path (balanced), neither extreme nor excessive, and promotes mutual respect in religious life. It emphasizes balance and fairness in understanding and practicing one's faith while respecting others. Conceptually, religious moderation in Indonesia is defined as an attitude of tolerance toward other religions, upholding peace and unity within a plural society. The Ministry of Religious Affairs (Ministry of Religion) through the Center for Religious Harmony continues to encourage the implementation of religious moderation programs. This includes strengthening the competence of civil servants (ASN), managing religious institutions, and developing religious education in Indonesia. The Ministry's efforts aim to form civil servants capable of demonstrating religious attitudes that promote tolerance and harmony in society. Through the development of moderate religious behavior



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and mutual respect, it is expected that cultural and religious harmony in Indonesia will continue to be maintained.

Keywords: *religious moderation, Ministry of Religious Affairs' civil servants (ASN), tolerance*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a high level of religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity. This situation presents both a strength and a challenge in maintaining social harmony amidst the dynamics of national life. In this context, **religious moderation** exists as a strategic approach to instill the values of balance, tolerance, and justice in religion (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Religious moderation does not intend to obscure religious teachings, but rather encourages religious communities to understand and practice their teachings proportionally, not excessively, and to respect differences.

As an institution that plays a central role in fostering religious life, **the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemenag RI)** has a significant responsibility in mainstreaming the values of religious moderation through various programs and policies. One concrete example of this effort is the implementation of **the Religious Moderation Strengthening Program**, which began in 2019. This program aims to develop civil servants with moderate, professional, and integrity-based characters as *religious moderators* in the workplace and within society (Kemenag RI, 2020).

In practice, the implementation of religious moderation within the Ministry of Religious Affairs is carried out through several strategies, including strengthening the capacity of civil servants, integrating moderation values into religious education, and cross-institutional collaboration to promote interfaith harmony (Huda, 2021). However, challenges remain, such as differences in understanding among employees, resistance to new values, and limited resources and institutional support (Fauzi, 2021).

The Ministry of Religious Affairs' Civil Servants (ASN) play a strategic role in maintaining harmony in religious life in Indonesia. As implementers of religious policies,



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ASN at the Ministry of Religious Affairs are not only required to be professional in administrative duties but also to act as religious moderators who demonstrate fairness, tolerance, and openness to diversity. Religious moderation is a fundamental value that must be instilled in every activity of ASN at the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This value encompasses four indicators: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and acceptance of local wisdom. In the context of public service, ASN at the Ministry of Religious Affairs are expected to demonstrate moderate behavior through inclusive service without discrimination based on religious background, ethnicity, or social class.

One of the main indicators of the success of the religious moderation program is **tolerance**, namely the ability to accept differences, respect diversity, and live peacefully side by side with adherents of other religions. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (2019), religious moderation emphasizes four main indicators: *national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and acceptance of local traditions*. In the context of religious moderation, tolerance is the foundation for strengthening interfaith harmony. Therefore, civil servants at the Ministry of Religious Affairs are expected to demonstrate a moderate attitude by respecting differing views in their work and social lives.

RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this paper is a qualitative descriptive approach. According to Moleong, LJ (2007), a qualitative descriptive approach is research that aims to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects in depth, by describing them in words and language. From this approach, the data is analyzed and the results of the analysis are presented in narrative form to find the meaning and implications of the implementation of the religious moderation program that has been implemented.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Religious Moderation in the ASN Environment, including:

1. Strengthening Literacy and Understanding of Religious Moderation.



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Ministry of Religious Affairs civil servants are provided with training and outreach on four indicators of religious moderation: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and acceptance of local traditions (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Activities such as *the Religious Moderation Workshop* and *Technical Guidance for Moderate Civil Servants* are efforts to shape the mindset and character of civil servants to be open and inclusive.

2. **Integration of Moderation Values in Public Duties and Services.**

Civil servants are expected to implement the values of moderation in their public services. Fairness, non-discrimination, and respect for diversity are part of the moderate civil servant ethic (Rahman, 2020). This is evident in marriage services, Islamic community guidance, madrasah education, and interfaith harmony.

3. **Exemplary Behavior and Moderate Work Culture.**

Civil servants (ASN), as public servants, are also required to set an example by behaving moderately in the workplace and in society. Moderate ASN will prioritize dialogue, respect differences, and reject hate speech (Hasan, 2021). This tolerance-based work culture is part of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' bureaucratic reform.

The implementations carried out include:

1. Strengthening Literacy and Understanding of Religious Moderation, among others
 - a. Ministry of Religion ASN participated in **training and outreach on religious moderation**, such as *the Religious Moderation Workshop* and *Technical Guidance for Moderate ASN*.
 - b. In this activity, ASN were given an understanding of **four indicators of religious moderation**, namely: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and acceptance of local traditions.



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- c. For example, ASN who participated in the workshop then held **interfaith discussions** at the Ministry of Religion office or **taught the value of tolerance to the community** in religious outreach activities.

2. Integration of Moderation Values in Public Duties and Services

- a. ASN applies the values of religious moderation in **serving the community**, for example providing fair services without differentiating between religions, ethnicities or groups.
- b. In practice, ASN demonstrates **a fair attitude, respects diversity, and is non-discriminatory** when serving religious administrative needs such as marriage, Hajj, and religious education.
- c. For example, KUA officers serve all religious communities in a friendly and professional manner without any particular religious bias.

3. Exemplary Behavior and Moderate Work Culture

- a. ASN are **role models in behaving moderately** in the workplace and society, such as **rejecting hate speech, respecting differences of opinion, and encouraging peaceful dialogue**.
- b. ASN also builds **a tolerant and inclusive work culture** in the office, for example by creating a work atmosphere that is mutually respectful among employees from different religious backgrounds.
- c. For example, in commemoration of religious holidays, the Ministry of Religion office holds **interfaith activities** or **joint prayers** to strengthen the spirit of nationalism and tolerance.

The implementation of religious moderation within the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) environment cannot be separated from the strengthening of **tolerance values**. Tolerance is the core of four indicators of religious moderation, which include: **national commitment, anti-violence, acceptance of local traditions, and tolerance of differences** (Ministry of



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Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Through various activities such as *the Religious Moderation Workshop* and *Technical Guidance for Moderate ASN*, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' ASN is directed to have an open mindset and character, respect differences, and be able to act inclusively in serving a diverse community.

In **integrating the value of moderation into public duties and services**, civil servants are expected to make tolerance their primary guiding principle. This tolerant attitude will be reflected in non-discriminatory service, respecting the religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the community. Moderate civil servants not only understand the concept of moderation theoretically but also apply it in public service practices such as religious education, community development, and empowerment of diverse communities (Rahman, 2020). Thus, civil servant service can be a means of strengthening social cohesion and fostering a culture of mutual respect between religious communities.

Furthermore, **exemplary behavior and a moderate work culture** are crucial for fostering tolerance in the workplace. Civil servants, as public servants, are expected to set an example by being fair, respecting differing views, and rejecting all forms of hate speech and discrimination (Hasan, 2021). This work culture, grounded in tolerance, strengthens the spirit of bureaucratic reform, emphasizing integrity, justice, and a focus on humane service.

Thus, the value of **tolerance** is not only part of the conceptual understanding of religious moderation, but has become **the soul and work culture of civil servants** at the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Tolerant and moderate civil servants will be crucial agents in maintaining harmony in religious life in Indonesia.

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