

# **The Role of Religious Counselors in Fostering Kampong Moderation in Subulussalam City**

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## **Abstract**

This research explores the role of Islamic religious instructors in fostering religious moderation in the villages of Subulussalam City, particularly in Suka Makmur and Penanggalan villages. The aim is to understand how religious extension workers promote harmonious socio-religious harmony in diverse communities. Using a qualitative approach and a multi-site study design, the research involved semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis to collect data from religious extension workers, community leaders, and community members. The results show that the role of religious educators as motivators, agents of change, central figures, and facilitators is crucial in maintaining and enhancing inter-religious harmony and cooperation. Activities such as joint construction of houses of worship, joint religious celebrations, and gotong royong show the community's high level of religious moderation. These findings suggest that the religious moderation model implemented in Suka Makmur and Penanggalan villages can be used as a reference for similar programs in other areas, strengthening the role of religious educators in promoting socio-religious harmony.

**Keywords:** Implementation; Religious Moderation; Religious Counsellors.

## Introduction

Indonesia is a country of diversity in religion, culture and race. As a country with a pluralistic and multicultural population, Indonesia has shown a balance that is the basic foundation for the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia.<sup>1</sup> Despite Islam being the largest religion in Indonesia, the state has adjusted its obligations to the interests of different faiths. This can be seen from the government policies that establish public events with religious events in Indonesia. Various ceremonies established in customs, traditions, and social beliefs are also firmly safeguarded to maintain peace and balance.<sup>2</sup>

Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, has a unique challenge in maintaining a balance between Islamic tradition and modern development.<sup>3</sup> Maintaining Islamic education's essence and values is increasingly complex amid globalisation and the rapid development of information technology.<sup>4</sup> One of the main issues that arises is how to maintain a balance between the pure teachings of Islam and the need to develop a moderate attitude in the face of differences and social dynamics.

In this context, Kampong Moderation emerges as one of the significant initiatives to instil the values of moderation in people's religious life.<sup>5</sup> Kampong Moderasi aims to encourage the community to adopt moderation in religious life. Moderation in Islam refers to the concept of wasatiyyah, which is an attitude that is fair, balanced, and not excessive. Moderation is essential for maintaining social harmony and preventing radicalism and extremism that can damage the fabric of society.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mhd Abror, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Bingkai Toleransi: Moderasi Beragama Dalam Bingkai Toleransi," *Rusydiah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 1, no. 2 (2020): 143–155.

<sup>2</sup> M Munif, Mujamil Qomar, and A B D AZIZ, "Kebijakan Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia," *Dirasah: Jurnal Studi Ilmu dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2023): 417–430.

<sup>3</sup> R I Kementerian Agama, *Kemenag Luncurkan Program 1.000 Kampung Moderasi Beragama, Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia* (Jakarta, 2023), <https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/kemenag-luncurkan-program-1-000-kampung-moderasi-beragama-uE6vi>.

<sup>4</sup> M Mukhibat, Ainul Nurhidayati Istiqomah, and Nurul Hidayah, "Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia (Wacana Dan Kebijakan)," *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education Management* 4, no. 1 (2023): 73–88.

<sup>5</sup> Faizal Risdianto and Imam Mas Arum, "Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Dan Toleransi Melalui 'Quotes' Di Kampung Mrican, Gendongan, Tingkir, Salatiga," *Bubungan Tinggi: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 4, no. 2 (2022): 561–572.

<sup>6</sup> Auqi Lu'lu In Nada, Tasha Monica Anggraini, and Achmad Sultoni, "Program Kampung Tepa Salira Sebagai Upaya Penguatan Toleransi Dan Moderasi Beragama Masyarakat Multikultural Kelurahan Tlogomas, Kota Malang," *JURPIKAT (Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat)* 5, no. 1 (2024): 109–119.

To achieve this goal, the role of religious instructors is crucial. Religious instructors, as agents of change, are responsible for educating and guiding the community towards a moderate understanding of Islam. They are the spearhead in conveying Islamic teachings to the community and have a vital role in fostering Kampong Moderation. Religious instructors are responsible for educating the community about the actual teachings of Islam and instilling the values of moderation in every aspect of life.

As evidenced by the research, religious believers have an essential role in promoting religious moderation in the community. In the context of the Christian Village in Leran Village, principles of religious moderation such as tolerance, deliberation, and dynamic innovation are actively applied, leading to the prevention of radicalism and intolerance.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Ahmad Suhendra's findings in Kalipasir show that maintaining religious moderation is achieved through an open-minded attitude and a shared awareness of diversity, emphasising the teachings of peace and harmony among different religious groups.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Desti Widiani's study, which focused on students from Islamic organisations, highlights the importance of religious higher education in instilling moderation values and responding to social issues related to religious moderation on campus.<sup>9</sup> Mad Sultoni Matondang conveyed the same finding, namely, the use of social media as an instrument of religious moderation da'wah of the Nahdlatul Ulama Da'wah Institute.<sup>10</sup> The findings collectively emphasise the critical role of religious advocates in building and promoting religious moderation in various social contexts.

This research is expected to contribute to the literature on Islamic education and religious moderation. The findings are expected to provide insights for policymakers, educational institutions, and the broader community on the critical role of religious instructors in promoting moderation values. In addition, this research is also expected to

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<sup>7</sup> Ibnu Habibi, "Implementasi Moderasi Beragama Dalam Mencegah Faham Radikalisme Dan Intoleran Di Kampung Kristen Bojonegoro," in *Proceedings of Annual Conference for Muslim Scholars*, vol. 6, 2022, 1139–1151.

<sup>8</sup> Ahmad Suhendra, "Konstruksi Moderasi Beragama Masyarakat Kalipasir Tangerang: Model Kerukunan Beragama Islam Dan Konghucu," *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, dan Tradisi)* 8, no. 1 (2022): 83–96.

<sup>9</sup> Desti Widiani, Muhammad Miftah, and Jiyanto Jiyanto, "Construction of Religious Moderation among Indonesian Islamic Student Organizations," *At-Tajdid: Jurnal Ilmu Tarbiyah* 12, no. 2 (2023): 137–147.

<sup>10</sup> Ahmad Sultoni Matondang and Hasnun Jauhari Ritonga, "Media Management of the Nahdlatul Ulama Da'wah Institute in Promoting Religious Moderation in the City of Padang Sidempuan," *Ishlah: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin, Adab dan Dakwah* 5, no. 1 (2023): 1–17.

serve as a reference for similar initiatives in other regions in an effort to create a peaceful and harmonious society.

### **Research Methodology**

This study explores religious instructors' role in fostering Kampong Moderation in Subulussalam City. It uses a qualitative approach, which was chosen because it allows researchers to understand social phenomena in their natural context. This approach also allows in-depth exploration of the experiences, perceptions, and interactions of religious instructors with the community in Kampong Moderasi.<sup>11</sup> This research uses a multi-site study design, which allows the researcher to compare and contrast the role of religious educators in several Moderation Kampongs in Subulussalam City. This will provide a more comprehensive insight into the variations and commonalities in moderation coaching practices.

The research will be conducted in several Moderation Kampongs in Subulussalam City. The selection of sites is based on the criteria of diversity in the social and cultural context and diversity in the coaching programme implemented by religious instructors. Participants in this research include religious instructors, community leaders, and members of the Kampong Moderation community. Participants will be selected purposively to ensure that the selected individuals have experiences and knowledge relevant to the research topic.

Data collection in this study is conducted through several techniques to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data. The methods used include: first, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with religious counsellors, community leaders, and community members. These interviews aim to explore their experiences, perceptions and views on the role of religious instructors in fostering moderation. Secondly, researchers will conduct participatory observations in the coaching activities undertaken by religious instructors. This observation will help researchers understand the dynamics of interaction and the methods used in coaching. Third, document analysis related to moderation coaching programmes, activity reports, and learning materials will be conducted to complement the data obtained from interviews and observations.

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<sup>11</sup> Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kombinasi (Mix Methods)* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2015).

The collected data will be analysed using the thematic analysis method. The analysis steps include interview transcription, data coding, identification of key themes, and interpretation of findings. The analysis will be conducted iteratively to ensure the accuracy and validity of the findings. To ensure the validity of the research, researchers will use data triangulation techniques by combining the results of interviews, observations, and document analyses. Member checking will also be conducted by asking participants to review and provide feedback on the research findings.

### **Religious Moderation Village Development Programme in Subulussalam City**

The people of Aceh are known to have a strong culture of gotong royong and helpfulness that has become an integral part of their daily lives. This culture facilitates social interaction and strengthens social solidarity and cohesion. Local expressions such as "*Ta which, i.e. mata gob sabot time, rho, i.e. mata drone even saboh blang,*" which translates as "to prevent the tears of others from spilling a bucket, it is better to spill one's tears in a rice field," emphasises the importance of helping others even if it means sacrificing oneself.<sup>12</sup> This expression reflects the deep altruistic values in Acehese culture.

Some values underpinning the strength of gotong royong in Acehese society include Philosophical Values in Acehese Culture. Acehese culture is rich in philosophical expressions that describe togetherness and tolerance. For example, the expression "*Deuek sama Derek Troe sama troe*" (hunger is endured, fullness is savoured) teaches a life of togetherness and anti-egoism.<sup>13</sup> Other expressions, such as "*Tajik ube lot tapak, ta due ube lot punggong*" (walk as far as the palm, sit as far as the back), teach not to interfere in other people's affairs, which illustrates the attitude of the Acehese people, who do not find fault with others and focus on their own affairs.<sup>14</sup>

*Secondly*, traditional Acehese houses also have philosophical values, with a narrow door and a spacious porch symbolising caution and openness in social interactions. This structure teaches people to be humble and maintain transparency in

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<sup>12</sup> Fauziah Nurdin, "Tradisi Reuhab Dalam Masyarakat Gampong Kuta Aceh Kecamatan Seunagan, Kabupaten Nagan Raya (Studi Tentang Kajian Budaya)" (2023).

<sup>13</sup> Muhammad Nasir, "Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Dalam Sastra Lisan Masyarakat Melayu Kajian Enam Cerita Rakyat Aceh" (2016).

<sup>14</sup> Hamdani Mulya and Razali Abdullah, *Bahasa Indatu Nenek Moyang Ureueng Aceh: Buku Bahasa Aceh–Bahasa Indatu Nenek Moyang Ureueng Aceh* (Afkari Publishing, 2018).

social interaction.<sup>15</sup> *Third*, the Role of Religion in Community Life: Religion plays a vital role in unification and reference in various social situations. Sociologically, religion is categorised as a social system consisting of a belief system, a system of worship, and a system of social relations.<sup>16</sup> In this context, religion in Aceh has constructive, regulative, and formative power to build the social order of society.

### **Moderasi Beragama di Desa Suka Makmur dan Desa Penanggalan**

The success of Suka Makmur Village and Penanggalan Village as Religious Moderation Villages is inseparable from several essential factors: attention, function, and structure. The following is a detailed explanation of these factors: first, the Attention Factor, Tolerance in Suka Makmur Village and Penanggalan Village, has been established for a long time, and its peak in July 2023. This village was named a model of religious moderation village. This crowning attracted the attention of the local community to understand interfaith tolerance. A communication forum between religious leaders from Islam, Christianity and Catholicism has been established to facilitate interreligious dialogue, although the implementation of concrete programs is still in its early stages. This finding is in line with the results of Dewi Sri Indriati's research, which explains that religious communication forums have a central role in encouraging the stability of inter-religious relations.<sup>17</sup>

*Second*, Functional Factors: These include social needs, past experiences, individual characteristics, and personal aspects. Social needs such as wedding receptions and interfaith business cooperation show positive interactions between religious communities. Past experiences, such as participation in interfaith religious ceremonies, strengthen social ties. Agus Arifand made the same statement,<sup>18</sup> Individual characteristics also influence perceptions of religious moderation, with tolerance being a natural fence to maintain harmony.

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<sup>15</sup> Hairumini Hairumini, Dewi Liesnoor Setyowati, and Tjaturahono Budi Sanjoto, "Kearifan Lokal Rumah Tradisional Aceh Sebagai Warisan Budaya Untuk Mitigasi Bencana Gempa Dan Tsunami," *JESS (Journal of Educational Social Studies)* 6, no. 1 (2017): 37–44.

<sup>16</sup> Ahmad Syafei, "Penelitian Pengembangan Agama Menjelang Awal Millenium III: Jakarta," *Badan Litbang Agama* (1999).

<sup>17</sup> Dewi Sri Indriati, "Urgensi Forum Komunikasi Umat Beragama Dalam Mewujudkan Kerukunan Umat Beragama Di Kota Manado," *transformasi* 3, no. 1 (2021): 120–140.

<sup>18</sup> Agus Arifand et al., "Membangun Harmoni Dan Toleransi Melalui Moderasi Beragama," *Ta'rim: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Anak Usia Dini* 4, no. 2 (2023): 164–177.

*Third, Structural Factors:* A deep understanding of religious moderation influences perceptions. The people of Suka Makmur Village and Penanggalan Village show varying knowledge of their respective religions, which affects the implementation of religious moderation. Government programs to socialise the values of religious moderation have been carried out, but there are still challenges in achieving a thorough understanding among the community.<sup>19</sup>

The socio-religious conditions in the Religious Moderation Village of Subulussalam City show that the values of gotong royong, tolerance, and mutual respect are fundamental in maintaining social harmony. The role of religion as a unifier and value system that forms social bonds is decisive in Aceh. Attentive, functional and structural factors contribute to religious moderation's success in Suka Makmur and Penanggalan villages. Effective implementation and a deep understanding of religious moderation are essential to ensure interfaith harmony and tolerance are maintained in the future.

**Religious Moderation Village Development Programme in Subulussalam City**

Pembentukan Kampung Moderasi Beragama (KMB) di Kota Subulussalam merupakan upaya strategis dalam membangun kerukunan umat beragama di Indonesia. Inisiatif ini diatur dalam Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam nomor 137 tahun 2023 yang menetapkan pedoman pembentukan Kampung Moderasi Beragama tahun 2023. Program ini terdiri dari beberapa tahap kegiatan yang sistematis, mulai dari persiapan hingga publikasi.

**1. Stages of Establishment of Religious Moderation Village**

Establishing a Religious Moderation Village involves several stages, including coordination, socialisation, pioneering, establishment, monitoring and evaluation, development, and reporting and publication. The following is the schedule of activities for the establishment of KMB in 2023:

No.	Description of Activity	Date
1	Coordination and Socialisation	13-19 February 2023
2	Formation of Working Group	20-28 February 2023
3	Pilot designation reporting	12-15 Maret 2023

<sup>19</sup> Fadhil Hidayat Akbar, Farida Lailatul Fasha, and Faris Abdullah, “The Concept of Religious Moderation in a Review of the Qur’an and Hadith: Konsep Moderasi Beragama Dalam Tinjauan Qur’an Hadis,” *Bulletin of Islamic Research* 2, no. 1 (2024): 59–80.

<b>4</b>	Pioneer	
	a. Data collection	1-12 Maret 2023
	b. Implementation of Pilot Activities	16 Maret – 15 Juni 2023
	c. Reporting of pilot results	16-23 June 2023
<b>5</b>	Establishment of Religious Moderation Village	
	a. Formation of the Assessment Team	20-28 February 2023
	b. Assessment and Verification	20 Juni 2023
	c. Launch/Launching	15 Juli 2023
	d. Launch Reporting	19-21 Juli 2023
<b>6</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation	6 Februari-Desember 2023
	Group Religious Moderation Index Survey	
	Target of Extension	10 December 2023
<b>7</b>	Development	16 Juli-31 Desember 2023
<b>8</b>	Year-end reporting	
	a. Pokja KMB Central	29 Desember 2023
	b. Pokja KMB Kanwil	27 Desember 2023
	c. Pokja KMB District/City	20 Desember 2023
	d. Pokja KMB KUA	18 Desember 2023
<b>9</b>	Publication KMB	Jan - Des 2023

## 2. Working Group Structure and Duties (Pokja) KMB

Establishing and implementing the Religious Moderation Village Programme (RMB) is systematically coordinated through working groups (Pokja) at various administrative levels. Each Pokja has a specific structure and tasks that aim to ensure the smooth running and success of the programme. With good coordination and the active role of each Pokja level, the programme is expected to run effectively and achieve its goal of promoting interfaith harmony and tolerance in Indonesia.

- a. Pokja KMB Pusat The Pokja KMB Pusat is formed by the Director General of Islamic Public Guidance and consists of several elements, namely the director, person in charge, chairman and vice chairman, secretary and vice secretary, and members.



- b. Provincial MTC Working Group The Provincial MTC Working Group is formed by the Head of the Provincial Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. It consists of a director (Head of the Regional Office), person in charge (Head of the Islamic Religious Information Division), chairperson (Functional Official of Islamic Religious Counselor), a secretary (Executive at the Penais Division), and members consisting of elements of religious instructors, religious leaders, community leaders, and religious community organisations.
- c. The District/City MTC Working Group is formed by the Head of the District/City Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. It consists of the person in charge (Head of the District/City Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs), chairperson (Head of Section in charge of Islamic Religious Counseling), secretary (Officer in charge of Islamic Religious Counseling), and members consisting of religious instructors, religious leaders, community leaders, and religious community organisations.
- d. Sub-district RTC Working Group The Sub-district RTC Working Group is formed by the Head of the Sub-district Religious Affairs Office (KUA) and the Functional Islamic Religious Counselor. Its structure consists of a chairperson (Head of the KUA), a secretary (Islamic Religious Instructor), and members consisting of religious instructors, religious leaders, community leaders, and religious community organisations.

### 3. Development of Religious Moderation Village

The development of WTC is carried out by taking into account each region's potential and through the stages of effective communication, information gathering, problem solution identification, development planning, and programme action. This development covers various aspects such as poverty alleviation, tourism, culture, gender strengthening, family resilience, and stunting reduction.

Development efforts include:

- a. Development of programme implementation structure
- b. Development of capacity building materials and programme managers
- c. Coordination and socialisation to related parties
- d. Development of district/city and local/sub-district networks

- e. Other matters related to the implementation of development that are regulated by additional guidelines

The Religious Moderation Village Development Programme in Subulussalam City is a strategic step in building religious harmony through various stages of systematic activities and coordination between multiple levels of government and society. The success of this programme depends on consistent implementation, thorough evaluation, and sustainable development based on local potential and community needs.

### **Implementation of the Religious Moderation Village Programme in Subulussalam City**

Implementing the Religious Moderation Village Programme in Subulussalam City is essential to promote interfaith harmony and build inclusive communities. Based on the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Public Guidance number 137 of 2023, the programme aims to increase awareness and practice of religious moderation through the active role of religious extension workers.<sup>20</sup>

The programme began with establishing working groups at the city and sub-district levels, followed by the inauguration of activities with relevant officials at the Hermia Hotel. Religious instructors work with other religious leaders to guide the community. They collaborate in various social activities such as gotong royong, disaster management, traditional ceremonies, and death ceremonies.<sup>21</sup> In the villages of Suka Makmur and Penanggalan, Muslims and non-Muslims are bound together in a large family, maintaining family relationships despite their different religions. Umar Al Faruq's research also revealed the cooperation model between religious instructors.<sup>22</sup>

### **Evaluation of the Religious Moderation Village Programme in Subulussalam City**

Evaluation is a systematic process that aims to measure the impact and effectiveness of a programme or activity. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI),

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<sup>20</sup> Direktur Jenderal Penguatan Riset Dan Pengembangan Kementerian Riset, Teknologi, “Surat Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Penguatan Riset Dan Pengembangan Kementerian Riset, Teknologi, Dan Pendidikan Tinggi Republik Indonesia Nomor 30/E/Kpt/2018 Tentang Hasil Akreditasi Jurnal Periode II Tahun 2018,” *RJ UIN RIL*, 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Ahmed Fernanda Desky, “Implementasi Moderasi Beragama Hindu Bali Berbasis Kearifan Lokal Di Kampung Bali Kabupaten Langkat,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Sosiologi Agama (JISA)* 5, no. 1 (2022): 1–20.

<sup>22</sup> Umar Al Faruq and Dwi Noviani, “Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Perisai Radikalisme Di Lembaga Pendidikan,” *TAUJIH: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 1 (2021): 59–77.

evaluation is an assessment or process to find the value of services, information, or products according to the needs of consumers or users.<sup>23</sup> Evaluation also involves gathering and observing a wide range of evidence to measure the impact and effectiveness of an object, programme or process about pre-defined specifications and user requirements.

Programme evaluation is carried out in three main stages: *first*, Programme Start Evaluation is carried out before the programme is implemented to determine the priority scale of various alternatives and possible ways to achieve the previously formulated objectives. *Second*, a Programme Implementation Evaluation is conducted while the programme is in progress to determine the level of progress and compare implementation with the initial plan. *Third*, the End of Programme Final evaluation is undertaken to review whether the programme achieved the objectives set and assess the efficiency and effectiveness of programme implementation.

The Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Instrument is based on the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Guidance Number 137 of 2023 concerning Guidelines for the Establishment of Religious Moderation Villages. The Directorate General of Islamic Guidance, the Provincial Ministry of Religious Affairs Regional Office, and the Regency / City Ministry of Religious Affairs Office evaluate the instrument. This evaluation is an integral part of the Religious Moderation Village establishment series.<sup>24</sup>

The next stage is the report on the establishment of the Religious Moderation Village, which is prepared by the KMB Working Group Team in stages and reported to the Director General of Islamic Public Guidance through online media.<sup>25</sup> Reporting is carried out in four stages: *first*, the Kampung Rintisan Determination Report contains information on the total number of villages in each sub-district, the number of pilot villages, a list of names of pilot villages/villages, the reason for the determination, and the date of determination. *Second*, Pilot Village Assessment Report Contains information on the list of assessed pilot villages/villages, the substance/qualification of the assessment

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<sup>23</sup> David Moeljadi et al., "Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI)" (Badan Pengembangan Bahasa dan Kebukuan, Kementerian Pendidikan dan ..., 2016).

<sup>24</sup> Andrivand Andrivand, "PENGUJIAN PERATURAN KEPALA DAERAH PASCA PUTUSAN MAHKAMAH KONSTITUSI NOMOR 137/PUU-XIII/2015 DAN PUTUSAN MAHKAMAH KONSTITUSI NOMOR 56 PUU-XIV/2016" (Unversitas Andalas, 2023).

<sup>25</sup> Lesi Maryani, "Internalisasi Moderasi Beragama Berbasis Ingatan Sejarah," *The International Journal of Pegon: Islam Nusantara civilization* 11, no. 03 (2023): 125–144.

object, information on the mapping of development potential, the date of assessment, the identity of the assessor, and the assessment results. *Third*, the Religious Moderation Village Determination and Launching Report contains information on the list of Religious Moderation Village names, the determination process, and a series of launching activities. *Fourth*, the Religious Moderation Village Development Report contains information on village potential, development programmes/activities carried out, programme/activity needs, constraints, and suggestions.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile, the evaluation of the Religious Moderation Village programme is carried out by the Directorate General of Islamic Public Guidance, the Provincial Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the Regency / City Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This evaluation is carried out at least once a year, as stipulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. 3 of 2024 concerning Procedures for Coordination, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting on the Implementation of Strengthening Religious Moderation.<sup>27</sup>

The evaluation of the Religious Moderation Village Programme in Suka Makmur Village and Penanggalan Village is conducted periodically to ensure the programme runs according to the set objectives. This annual evaluation is essential for inputting future programme planning, continuation, and development.<sup>28</sup> With a structured and systematic evaluation, the Religious Moderation Village programme can, it is hoped, continue to improve its effectiveness in promoting interfaith harmony and tolerance in Subulussalam City.

### **The Role of Religious Counselors in Building Religious Harmony**

Religious instructor is a functional position in the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia that serves as the government's spearhead in delivering religious messages and government programmes.<sup>29</sup> According to structuralisation theory,

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<sup>26</sup> Nirbitho Satrio Anggono et al., "Optimalisasi Kegiatan Keagamaan Serta Pendidikan Agama Di Kampung Nunuk Desa Cililin," *PROCEEDINGS UIN SUNAN GUNUNG DJATI BANDUNG* 3, no. 10 (2023).

<sup>27</sup> Kamal Kamal and Muhammad Nur Akbar Rasyid, "Evaluasi Moderasi Beragama Pada Program Wawasan Kebangsaan Di Pondok Pesantren As' Adiyah Sebatik," *PETITUM* 11, no. 1 (2023): 25–34.

<sup>28</sup> Arda Tonara, Nopri Abadi Miko, and Ashari Efendi, "Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Pada Masyarakat Kampung Bintang Pepara," *Catimore: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 2, no. 2 (2023): 92–99.

<sup>29</sup> M Abubakar and Asmaul Husna, "Peran Penyuluh Agama Islam Dalam Memberikan Pemahaman Moderasi Agama Pada Masyarakat Di Kabupaten Bone," *La Tenriruwa: Jurnal Bimbingan Penyuluhan Islam* 1, no. 1 (2022): 86–103.

religious instructors can be seen as agents who can shape structures in society through repetitive actions and setting an example for the community. Religious instructors are expected to develop daily habits that provide security and enable people to deal with their social lives efficiently. In practice, religious instructors play various functions. First, Informative and Educative Functions: Religious instructors act as preachers tasked with conveying religious teachings, providing religious information, and educating the community through religious teachings.<sup>30</sup>

*Second*, the Consultative Function: Religious counsellors act as consultants who help people solve problems they face, personally, as a family, or as a general community. *Third*, Administrative Function: Religious instructors are responsible for planning, reporting, and evaluating the implementation of counselling and guidance. *Fourth*, Guidance by Religious Counselors. Religious instructors have main tasks assigned by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Subulussalam City. The duties of religious instructors include eradicating Al-Quran illiteracy, implementing prayer, fostering sakinah families, zakat, waqaf, and halal products, and overcoming splinter sects, radicalism, and drugs.<sup>31</sup>

In practice, the guidance provided by religious instructors in Subulussalam City is very diverse and covers various essential aspects of social and spiritual life. These include eradicating Quranic illiteracy, fostering sakinah families, empowering zakat, and overcoming the influence of promiscuity, drugs, and LGBT. Simpang Kiri's position as the capital of Subulussalam and a social passageway facilitates changes due to social transformation and interaction with outside communities.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, the guidance includes material on radicalism and splinter sects, as well as material on reading and writing the Quran and religious tussah. This material is considered essential to prevent people from being influenced by misleading sects and changing their mindset in the wrong direction. Religious instructors use various guidance methods, including general and special socialisation. They are often invited to guide mosques, where the community gathers for religious lectures and training. The material covers various areas of religion, such as sunnah prayers, funeral prayers, and proper prayer procedures.

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<sup>30</sup> B Herry-Priyono, *Anthony Giddens: Suatu Pengantar* (Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> Fransiskus Janu Hamu, "Peran Penyuluh Agama Katolik Dalam Membangun Moderasi Beragama," *Perigel: Jurnal Penyuluhan Masyarakat Indonesia* 2, no. 2 (2023): 57–68.

<sup>32</sup> Abubakar and Husna, "Peran Penyuluh Agama Islam Dalam Memberikan Pemahaman Moderasi Agama Pada Masyarakat Di Kabupaten Bone."

Although this guidance program works well, some challenges must be addressed, especially about the influence of outside cultures and splinter sects. Therefore, religious instructors must prepare adequate knowledge and take a comprehensive approach to guiding the community. The material provided is always based on the Quran and hadith, aiming to ensure that the community understands Islamic law and sharia in detail and can distinguish between good and evil.

Implementing the Religious Moderation Village Programme in Subulussalam City shows the vital role of religious instructors in fostering and maintaining religious harmony. Religious instructors can be effective agents of change in society through informative, consultative and administrative functions. The success of this programme relies heavily on interfaith collaboration, a comprehensive approach, and a deep understanding of the values of religious moderation. The programme is expected to continue to grow and positively contribute to creating a harmonious and tolerant society.

Establishing Kampung Moderasi Beragama (KMB) in Subulussalam City has shown promising results in promoting religious harmony and community engagement. However, to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of this programme, future research should focus on the following key areas: *First*, Assessing the long-term impact of the RTC programme on religious harmony and community integration. *Second*, conduct longitudinal studies that track changes in community relations, conflict resolution, and social cohesion over 5-10 years. *Third*, Comparative Analysis with Other Regions

Focusing on these areas, future research can build on current findings and address existing limitations, thereby contributing to the continuous improvement and wider adoption of the Religious Moderation Village programme. This research will not only improve religious harmony in Subulussalam City but also provide valuable insights for other regions seeking social cohesion and religious tolerance.

## Conclusions

Based on the research results on the role of Islamic religious instructors in fostering religious moderation in villages in Subulussalam City, it can be concluded that the socio-religious situation in Suka Makmur village and Penanggalan village shows harmonious harmony. Villagers live side by side regardless of religious background, which is reflected in various activities such as wedding receptions, construction of houses of worship

independently, provision of religious empowerment funds, implementation of mass circumcision, and maulid celebrations. People of different religions help each other and cooperate in various social activities such as gotong royong, disaster management, traditional parties, and death ceremonies. Family relationships are also maintained despite religious differences, with many families consisting of Muslim and Christian members. Tribal and clan similarities and occupational relationships are also unifying factors in religious moderation in Suka Makmur and Penanggalan villages.

The Joint Secretariat evaluates the religious moderation village programme. This evaluation includes assessing the progress of the programme's achievements and measuring its impact. The assessment is carried out periodically every year and whenever needed to ensure the programme runs according to the objectives set. The religious moderation village programme in Suka Makmur and Penanggalan villages is a reference for establishing the Religious Moderation Village, regulating its implementation, and ensuring accountability. Religious instructors are essential in implementing this programme and making it run well. The role of religious instructors includes being motivators, agents of change, central figures, and facilitators from the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

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