

Ministry Of Religious Affairs' Innovative Strategy In Building Lumajang District As A Model Of Religious Moderation

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi strategi inovatif Kementerian Agama Kabupaten Lumajang dalam menjadikan Lumajang sebagai model moderasi beragama, dengan Desa Senduro sebagai fokus utama. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan pejabat Kementerian Agama, tokoh agama, serta masyarakat setempat. Selain itu, dilakukan observasi partisipatif terhadap kegiatan moderasi dan analisis dokumen kebijakan terkait. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa program-program Kementerian Agama, seperti penguatan dialog antaragama dan pendidikan agama yang inklusif, berhasil meningkatkan kerukunan dan toleransi di masyarakat. Namun, terdapat tantangan seperti resistensi budaya lokal dan minimnya dukungan sumber daya. Meskipun demikian, implementasi strategi ini berdampak positif dalam mempererat hubungan antarumat beragama di Desa Senduro, menciptakan lingkungan yang lebih harmonis dan toleran. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan kebijakan moderasi beragama di tingkat lokal dan memperkaya wacana moderasi beragama di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Moderasi Beragama, Strategi Inovatif, Moderasi Beragama Berbasis Komunitas

Abstract: This study aims to explore the innovative strategies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Lumajang district in making Lumajang a model of religious moderation, with Senduro village as the main focus. Using a qualitative approach through a case study, data was collected through in-depth interviews with Ministry of Religious Affairs officials, religious leaders, and local communities. In addition, participatory observation of moderation activities and analysis of relevant policy

documents were conducted. The results show that the Ministry of Religious Affairs' programs, such as strengthening interfaith dialogue and inclusive religious education, have successfully improved harmony and tolerance in the community. However, there are challenges such as local cultural resistance and lack of resource support. Nonetheless, the implementation of these strategies has had a positive impact in strengthening interfaith relations in Senduro Village, creating a more harmonious and tolerant environment. This research is expected to contribute to the development of religious moderation policies at the local level and enrich the discourse on religious moderation in Indonesia.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Innovative Strategy, Community-Based Religious Moderation

A. INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation is very important in maintaining harmony and harmony amidst religious diversity in Indonesia.¹ Lumajang District, located in East Java Province, has great potential to be an example in the application of religious moderation to foster interfaith harmony. Religious moderation aims to create a balance between deep religious understanding and tolerance for differences, so that each individual can practice his or her faith without social friction.² This is especially relevant in a national context where issues of intolerance and extremism often arise in various regions.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs has a central role in promoting religious moderation initiatives across Indonesia.³ The strategies implemented by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Lumajang District are key in building a respectful, open and inclusive society. Through various programs and policies, the Ministry of Religious Affairs seeks to strengthen the values of moderation, especially in areas that have the potential to face religious-based conflicts.⁴ In a

¹ Aria Sandra et al., "Ethnic Harmony in Islamic Higher Education: Building Religious Moderation in Aceh's Private Islamic Religious Universities," *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 24, no. 1 (2024): 29-54.

² Sulaiman Sulaiman et al., "Moderation Religion in the Era Society 5.0 and Multicultural Society: Studies Based on Legal, Religious, and Social Reviews," *Linguistics and Culture Review* 6, no. S5 (2022): 180-93.

³ Alfina Hidayah, Nadia Rizky Fauziyah, and Waskito Wibowo, "The Role of The State in Fostering Religious Harmony in Indonesia: A Historical Review, Challenges, and Policy Towards Moderation," *Academic Journal of Islamic Principles and Philosophy* 5, no. 1 (2024): 1-36.

⁴ Kunawi Basyir, "Fighting Islamic Radicalism Through Religious Moderatism in Indonesia: An Analysis of Religious Movement," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 21, no. 2 (2020): 205-20.

broader context, it is important to compare the approach to religious moderation in Lumajang with other regions in Indonesia and other pluralistic societies in the world. This will provide a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the strategy implemented in Lumajang and how it can be applied globally.

This research aims to analyze the innovative strategies implemented by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Lumajang district in making the district a model of religious moderation. The research does not only focus on the general strategy, but also explores unique aspects of Lumajang's approach that have not been explored in previous studies. For example, how the collaboration between various religious leaders and the local community in Lumajang creates initiatives that are different compared to other regions, as researched by Taufiq & Alkholid,⁵ and Sinaga et al.⁶ This research will complement the existing literature by highlighting specific and in-depth innovative strategies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Lumajang district, and assess their impact in realizing the district as a model of religious moderation.

Using a qualitative and case study approach, this research will analyze the strategy of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Lumajang district, with Senduro village as a model of implementation. The research subjects include Ministry of Religious Affairs officials, religious leaders, local communities, and moderation organization administrators. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document studies related to moderation policies and reports. Data analysis was thematic and content-based to identify key themes, with data triangulation to ensure validity. Research procedures included instrument preparation, collection, analysis and reporting, with due regard to research ethics through informed consent and confidentiality.⁷

⁵ Firmanda Taufiq and Ayu Maulida Alkholid, "Peran Kementerian Agama Dalam Mempromosikan Moderasi Beragama Di Era Digital," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 41, no. 2 (2021).

⁶ M Hendri Sugara Sinaga et al., "Peran Kementrian Agama Dalam Moderasi Beragama," *Jurnal Al-Qiyam* 3, no. 1 (2022): 21-25.

⁷ Alvin Dian Pramuja et al., "Sustainable Governance and the Future of Islamic Boarding Schools: Strengthening Human Resources Based on Religious Values: Tata Kelola Berkelanjutan

B. INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES OF THE MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS LUMAJANG DISTRICT

Senduro Village is one example of a village that is the focus of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' attention in an effort to implement and strengthen the concept of religious moderation at the local level. In this context, a "religious moderation village" refers to a village that is actively encouraged to implement the values of religious moderation, including tolerance, harmony and openness to differences in the daily lives of its people.⁸ In Senduro Village, this concept is realized through the harmony of social life, where people from different religious backgrounds can coexist peacefully.

The values of religious moderation that are applied include tolerance for differences in beliefs, rejection of all forms of violence, and upholding social justice among all elements of society.⁹ The application of the value of tolerance in Senduro Village is reflected in the attitude of people who respect each other's religious beliefs, without any discrimination. Although in Senduro village there is a majority of Hindus due to the existence of the largest temple used by Hindus as a mecca for them, so often once a year during the holidays they gather at Mandagiri Senduro Temple. However, this is not a problem for the people of Senduro to respect each other not to elbow each other. Social and cultural activities in the village involve interfaith participation, showing how strong the commitment of residents to the principle of peaceful coexistence is. Conflicts or differences in views are resolved through dialog and deliberation, avoiding violence that can undermine harmony.

With direct cooperation from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Senduro Village acts as a model of a moderation village that can serve as an example for other villages. In the context of the development of religious moderation in

Dan Masa Depan Pesantren: Penguatan Sumber Daya Manusia Berbasis Nilai-Nilai Keagamaan," *QULUBANA: Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* 5, no. 1 (2024): 24-38.

⁸ Mirzon Daheri et al., "Strengthening Religious Moderation: Learning from the Harmony of Multireligious People in Indonesia.," *Journal of Population & Social Studies* 31 (2023).

⁹ Ade Jamarudin et al., "Implementing Religious Moderation Using the Perspective of the Qur'an," *KnE Social Sciences*, 2022, 579-90.

Lumajang district, John Esposito's theory of religious moderation and T.H. Marshall's theory of tolerance complement each other. Religious moderation, as explained by Esposito, encourages individuals and groups to adopt an inclusive and open attitude towards differences, which is an important foundation in the context of pluralism.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Marshall's theory of tolerance provides a framework for understanding how mutual respect and appreciation of religious rights can strengthen the process of moderation.¹¹

Tolerance is not only concerned with passive acceptance of the existence of others, but also requires individuals to actively participate in creating space for harmonious interaction.¹² By integrating the approach of religious moderation and the principle of tolerance, the strategies implemented by the Ministry of Religious Affairs can be more effective in building a peaceful and harmonious society.¹³

This creates a synergy that strengthens the values of togetherness and encourages collaboration between various elements of society, thus making Lumajang District a model for religious moderation at the national level. After seeing some of these findings, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has developed new innovations to improve religious moderation in Lumajang District, especially in Penanggal Village. And here are the efforts and strategies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Lumajang district in creating a religious moderation village in Lumajang district.

1. Counseling Religious and Community Leaders

Counseling religious and community leaders is one of the important strategies in strengthening religious moderation at the local level. Religious and

¹⁰ Eunsook Jung, "Bringing Social Movements into the Inclusion-Moderation Thesis: The Influence of Religious Fundamentalism in Indonesia and South Korea," *Asian Survey* 61, no. 5 (2021): 797-824.

¹¹ Imam Pribadi, "Fostering Religious Tolerance in Early Childhood: The Influence of Parental Role," *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education* 7, no. 1 (2023): 192-204.

¹² Rolf Husmann, "Proactive Tolerance," in *Proactive Tolerance* (Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG, 2021), 63-74.

¹³ Yuli Habibatul Imamah, "Integration of Religious Moderation in Developing an Islamic Religious Education Curriculum," *Scaffolding: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Multikulturalisme* 5, no. 3 (2023): 573-89.

community leaders play a very influential role in guiding and influencing their communities.¹⁴ Therefore, outreach aimed at them aims to increase their understanding of the principles of religious moderation, as well as facilitate interfaith dialogue.

Outreach methods can include various activities, such as trainings and workshops specifically designed for religious and community leaders.¹⁵ These activities provide in-depth knowledge of religious moderation as well as practical skills in applying it in their communities.¹⁶ Additional educational materials, such as guidebooks, brochures, and audiovisual materials, can be provided to support deeper understanding.¹⁷

The benefits of this outreach are significant. Religious and community leaders who have received training can serve as agents of change in their communities, spreading messages of religious moderation and leading by good example. As such, it can strengthen communities, reduce the potential for conflict, and improve overall interfaith harmony.¹⁸

To ensure the effectiveness of outreach, it is also important to conduct evaluation and follow-up. Monitoring the impact of the outreach will help assess the extent to which the knowledge and skills provided are applied in the field. Follow-up support, such as mentorship or technical assistance, is also

¹⁴ Mailin Mailin, Hasan Sazali, and Suhesti Wira Dharma, "Development of Religious Moderation in North Sumatera Communities By Strengthening Crosscultural Communication Based on Local Wisdom Values," *Al-Qalam* 29, no. 2 (2023): 244–53.

¹⁵ Jill D McLeigh et al., "One Person Can Make a Difference: Stories of Strong Communities and Their Outreach Workers," *International Journal on Child Maltreatment: Research, Policy and Practice* 3, no. 2 (2020): 177–96.

¹⁶ Masturin Masturin, "Development of Islamic Religious Education Materials Based on Religious Moderation in Forming Student Character," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 4 (2022): 346–55.

¹⁷ Beni Azwar, Deri Wanto, and Yurika Nopianti, "Characters in Audio Visual-Based Teaching Materials in Thematic Learning in Elementary Schools," *Tadbir: Jurnal Studi Manajemen Pendidikan* 6, no. 2 (2022): 252–60.

¹⁸ Genti Kruja, "Interfaith Harmony through Education System of Religious Communities," *Religion & Education* 49, no. 1 (2022): 104–17.

needed to ensure that religious moderation initiatives continue to grow and deliver positive results in the community.¹⁹

2. Collaborating with FKUB in carrying out activities

Collaborating with the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) in implementing activities is a strategic step to strengthen religious moderation and social harmony.²⁰ FKUB, which functions as a liaison institution between religious communities, can be an effective partner in designing and implementing programs aimed at improving interfaith relations.²¹ This cooperation starts with planning activities that involve FKUBs in developing plans that are in line with the goals of religious moderation. FKUBs can provide guidance on the format and content of effective activities, such as seminars, workshops, or discussion forums, and ensure that they include a range of religious perspectives in an inclusive manner.

In the implementation of activities, FKUBs can act as providers of logistical support, including facilities, participants and materials. The involvement of FKUBs in the implementation of activities not only ensures efficient organization, but also guarantees the active participation of various religious groups. In addition, FKUBs can serve as moderators in interfaith discussions, ensuring that the dialogue proceeds smoothly and productively. They can also assist in building networks among religious and community leaders to support ongoing dialog and cooperation.

Counseling and education is another aspect of this cooperation. FKUBs can develop relevant educational materials on religious moderation and conduct training for religious leaders and community leaders. Social campaigns

¹⁹ Gayatri Sahgal and Timothy Kimaiyo, "Youth Resilience to Violent Extremism: An Evaluation of a Mentorship Intervention in Kenya," *Journal for Deradicalization*, no. 24 (2020): 113-60.

²⁰ Humaizi Humaizi et al., "Harmony in Virtual Space: Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB) Development Communication in Creating Digital Literacy Based on Religious Moderation," *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development* 8, no. 7 (2024): 4299.

²¹ Agus Sunaryo and Mawi Husni Albar, "The Vision of Islam and Nationality of Islamic Religious Organizations in Indonesia: Study of Nahdlatul Wathan, Al-Irsyad and Al-Washliyyah," *International Journal of Professional Business Review* 8, no. 9 (2023): e03690-e03690.

managed with FKUBs can raise awareness about the importance of tolerance and interfaith harmony. Through these educational materials and campaigns, people can better understand the principles of religious moderation and how to apply them in their daily lives.

After the activities are completed, evaluation is an important step that involves FKUBs assessing the results and impact of the activities that have been implemented. This evaluation helps in assessing the success of the activity in achieving the goal of religious moderation and provides a basis for adjusting future strategies. FKUBs can provide recommendations for improvements and adjustments to the strategy to ensure that the religious moderation initiative continues to grow and deliver positive results in the community. By working together with FKUBs, activities can be more coordinated, effective and inclusive, creating a harmonious and tolerant environment at the community level.

3. Multicultural Education Program Development

The development of multicultural education programs is a crucial strategy to promote religious moderation and social harmony from an early age.²² The main objective of this strategy is to educate the younger generation about cultural and religious diversity and the importance of tolerance and mutual respect.²³ The program aims to integrate multicultural values in the education curriculum, both in school and out-of-school settings, thus creating a better awareness and understanding of differences in society.²⁴

The implementation of multicultural education programs can begin by integrating related materials in the school curriculum, especially at the primary level, including lessons that teach about various cultures and religions, as well

²² Radhia Ainun Sechandini et al., "Multicultural-Based Learning of Islamic Religious Education for the Development of Students' Social Attitudes," *At-Tadzkir: Islamic Education Journal* 2, no. 2 (2023): 106–17.

²³ Semiyu Adejare Aderibigbe et al., "Fostering Tolerance and Respect for Diversity through the Fundamentals of Islamic Education," *Religions* 14, no. 2 (2023): 212.

²⁴ Kaleb Germinaro et al., "Diversity in Outdoor Education: Discrepancies in SEL across a School Overnight Program," *Journal of Experiential Education* 45, no. 3 (2022): 256–75.

as the values of tolerance.²⁵ These lessons should be designed to provide a deep understanding of diversity and how to interact respectfully with individuals from different backgrounds.²⁶

In addition to curriculum integration, training for teachers and educators is essential to ensure the effective delivery of multicultural education materials. This training can include methods for managing diverse classrooms as well as techniques for teaching the principles of tolerance and inclusiveness. With trained teachers, educational materials will be delivered in a sensitive and educational manner, creating a learning environment that supports intercultural harmony.²⁷

C. STRATEGY BARRIERS IN STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS MODERATION OF THE MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS LUMAJANG DISTRICT

1. Lack of Public Understanding of Religious Moderation

One of the main obstacles in the Lumajang District Ministry of Religious Affairs' efforts to promote religious moderation is the lack of understanding of this concept among some communities. Religious moderation, which emphasizes moderation in religion and avoids extremism, is still often misunderstood by many groups in society.²⁸ For some, religious moderation is perceived as an attempt to undermine pure religious beliefs or even lead to syncretism, which is the mixing of various religious teachings.²⁹ As a result,

²⁵ Finadatul Wahidah and Dewi Maristyawati, "Model of Multicultural Education In Religion As A Strengthening Strategy The Character of Tolerance In Early Childhood," *FALASIFA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 14, no. 01 (2023): 12-23.

²⁶ H Richard Milner, *Start Where You Are, but Don't Stay There: Understanding Diversity, Opportunity Gaps, and Teaching in Today's Classrooms* (Harvard Education Press, 2021).

²⁷ Leonardo O Munali, "Micro and Macro Practices of Multicultural Education in a Philippine University: Is It Global Integration Ready?," *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 29, no. 5 (2020): 441-54.

²⁸ Demy Jura, "Religious Moderation: An Approach of Religious Life in Indonesia," *Jurnal Invoasi Penelitian (JIP)* 1, no. 10 (2021): 2049-56.

²⁹ Gustiana Isya Marjani, "Overcoming Theological Dilemmas: Fostering Religious Moderation through the Resolution of Faith and Rationality," *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama Dan Lintas Budaya* 7, no. 2 (2023): 115-28.

programs that aim to strengthen tolerance and pluralism among religious groups are often met with rejection or suspicion.

This lack of understanding is generally caused by the lack of in-depth and targeted education about what is meant by religious moderation.³⁰ Many people, especially in rural areas, have not had sufficient access to correct information about the importance of maintaining balance in religious life in a pluralistic society. Education often does not reach the grassroots because it is still focused on the religious elite or the government.

Moreover, in societies with strong religious tendencies, the idea of moderation is often perceived as a form of religious liberalization. Religious moderation, which teaches tolerance of differences, is sometimes misinterpreted as a compromise on basic religious principles.³¹ In some communities, especially those in more conservative social settings, being open to different religions and views is perceived as a threat to the purity of the faith.³² This has led some community groups to reject involvement in religious moderation programs for fear that their religious identity will be threatened.

The influence of religious leaders who tend not to support moderation also exacerbates this situation. Furthermore, the lack of deep religious literacy among the public also exacerbates the situation. Many people tend to simply accept religious teachings textually without a deep understanding of their meaning and context. This narrow textual understanding is often used to justify intolerant attitudes towards other groups, as they feel that their religious teachings demand absolute obedience with no room for interpretation. Religious moderation, which emphasizes a broader, contextual understanding

³⁰ Muhammad Nasir and Muhammad Khairul Rijal, "Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (2021): 213–41.

³¹ Jorge Alexander Ravagli Cardona, "Religious Education in Liberal Democracy: A Reflection on Habermas' Recent Contributions and the Implications for Colombia" (University of Birmingham, 2020).

³² Jesse L Preston and Adam Baimel, "Towards a Psychology of Religion and the Environment," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 40 (2021): 145–49.

of religious teachings, requires a higher level of religious literacy, which unfortunately most people do not have.³³

To overcome this obstacle, greater efforts are needed to socialize religious moderation to the wider community. The Ministry of Religious Affairs needs to work with influential religious figures to become ambassadors of religious moderation, who can explain the importance of moderation in religion and support harmonious relations between religious communities. In addition, a more inclusive and contextualized approach to education needs to be implemented, taking into account the local culture and values that exist in each community. This education should be conducted in a sustainable and comprehensive manner, not only in formal forms such as seminars or lectures, but also through social media and traditional media, in order to reach a wider audience.

2. Low Level of Community Education

The low level of community education is one of the main obstacles in the effort to improve religious moderation in Lumajang District. Education plays an important role in shaping a person's perspective and mindset, including in understanding the concepts of tolerance, diversity and religious moderation.³⁴ When access to formal education is limited, people tend to have a less in-depth understanding of the basic principles that support religious moderation, such as openness to differences and critical thinking.

In rural areas where access to education remains limited, people are generally more susceptible to being influenced by narrow and exclusive views on religion.³⁵ They may only rely on religious understandings that have been passed down through generations or by local religious leaders, without having

³³ Imam Subchi et al., "Religious Moderation in Indonesian Muslims," *Religions* 13, no. 5 (2022): 451.

³⁴ Dinar Saharani and Henny Suharyati, "Values Of Religious Moderation In The Perspective Of Educational Philosophy," *International Journal of Teaching and Learning* 2, no. 2 (2024): 440-50.

³⁵ Marie Juul Petersen, "Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief and Gender Equality in The Context of The Sustainable Development Goals: A Focus on Access to Justice, Education and Health Reflections from The 2019 Expert Consultation Process," 2020.

the opportunity to explore a more inclusive and balanced understanding of religion. As a result, the concept of religious moderation, which emphasizes balance and respect for differences, is often considered foreign or even contradictory to their beliefs.

Low levels of education also affect people's ability to sort out information.³⁶ Especially in the current digital era, when information is widespread through social media and the internet, people who have low literacy are more easily influenced by false or misleading information such as hoaxes, extreme propaganda, intolerant narratives and others. In this case, people who have higher education will not be easily influenced, in contrast to the mindset of those with low education, they will be easily influenced by the fake news that goes viral on social media. In this context, the narrative of religious moderation disseminated by the government and other parties often loses out to extremist narratives that are more emotional and provocative. As a result, they tend to maintain exclusive views and reject ideas that introduce diversity as part of everyday life.

Not only that, low levels of education also affect people's ability to actively engage in interfaith dialog.³⁷ Interfaith dialogue is an important way of building understanding and cooperation between religious communities, but engaging in this dialogue requires communication skills, a broad understanding of religious teachings, and an open attitude towards the perspectives of others.³⁸ For people who do not have access to adequate education, engaging in this kind of dialog can be a big challenge. They may feel insecure or lack sufficient knowledge to discuss more complex religious issues, preferring to avoid dialogue and stick to their own beliefs.

³⁶ Andreu Casero-Ripollés, "Impact of Covid-19 on the Media System. Communicative and Democratic Consequences of News Consumption during the Outbreak," *Casero-Ripollés, Andreu (2020). "Impact of Covid-19 on the Media System. Communicative and Democratic Consequences of News Consumption during the Outbreak". El Profesional de La Información 29, no. 2 (2020): e290223.*

³⁷ Kruja, "Interfaith Harmony through Education System of Religious Communities."

³⁸ M Aris Rofiqi and Mochamad Ziaul Haq, "Islamic Approaches in Multicultural and Interfaith Dialogue," *Integritas Terbuka: Peace and Interfaith Studies 1, no. 1 (2022): 47-58.*

To address this issue, improving access to education in areas with low education levels is crucial. The government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs and other relevant agencies, needs to encourage educational programs that focus not only on formal education, but also inclusive and moderate religious education. These programs should target people in rural and more remote communities, where access to education is still very limited. In addition, education based on the values of religious moderation needs to be incorporated into the religious education curriculum in schools, so that from an early age, the younger generation already has a balanced and inclusive understanding of religion.

3. Traditional Religious Mindset

Traditional religious mindset is often a major obstacle in the effort to increase religious moderation in society.³⁹ This mindset tends to prioritize a rigid, dogmatic and exclusive understanding of religion, where religious teachings are considered absolute truths that should not be questioned or reinterpreted. In this context, religious moderation is often interpreted as a form of weakness or betrayal of religious values that have been passed down for generations.

One of the characteristics of the traditional mindset is the tendency to see religion in black-and-white terms.⁴⁰ Everything that is not in line with religious teachings understood literally is considered wrong or heretical. This approach creates an atmosphere where differences of opinion or interpretation are perceived as a threat to the unity and purity of religious teachings. As such, programs that aim to promote moderate, tolerant and inclusive attitudes are often rejected by those who hold to this mindset. They feel that accepting different views is tantamount to denigrating their own faith.

³⁹ Uswatun Hasanah and Asghar Abbas, "Optimizing Religious Moderation through Progressive Islamic Education: A Philosophical Study," *TAFAHUS: Jurnal Pengkajian Islam* 3, no. 1 (2023): 98-115.

⁴⁰ Cary Hendrix Jr, *In Black and White* (Xlibris Corporation, 2021).

This traditional mindset is also often reinforced by the influence of the wider social and cultural environment.⁴¹ In societies where traditional norms are still dominant, individuals tend to adopt similar views, following what their community believes and embraces. Indeed, this cultural factor is the biggest factor, making it very difficult to break down traditional thinking as desired.

One of the biggest challenges in overcoming this traditional mindset is how to educate people to think more critically and be open to differences. Many individuals who have been raised in an environment that promotes an exclusive understanding of religion find it difficult to accept a more inclusive view. They may have become accustomed to narratives that emphasize that their faith is the only right way, making it difficult to accept that there are other ways of understanding religious truth.

The impact of this traditional mindset is also seen in everyday social practices. As if those who still prioritize life with their traditional thinking or commonly known as “kolot” thinking always act as if they do not need modern thinking like today.

To overcome this obstacle, a comprehensive approach is needed to increase people's understanding and awareness of religious moderation. Thus, people can be invited to reconsider their views on religious teachings and understand that moderation is not a threat, but a solution to create harmony in the midst of diversity.

It is important to create spaces for interfaith and intercultural dialogue, where individuals from different backgrounds can meet and share experiences. In this context, traditionally exclusive mindsets can be transformed into more inclusive ones that value differences and celebrate diversity as part of the wider religious life.

⁴¹ Dianne Dredge, “Regenerative Tourism: Transforming Mindsets, Systems and Practices,” *Journal of Tourism Futures* 8, no. 3 (2022): 269–81.

D. CONCLUSION

From the results of this study, it can be concluded that the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Lumajang District has implemented various innovative strategies in building and promoting religious moderation through an inclusive approach that involves various elements of society. The importance of moderate religious education, interfaith dialogue, and community empowerment programs are key in this strategy. Initiatives such as skills training for vulnerable groups, the establishment of interfaith forums, and awareness campaigns on religious moderation have shown positive results in strengthening community values and reducing the potential for social conflict. As such, Lumajang district can serve as a model for religious moderation efforts at the national level, promoting collaboration and active participation from all levels of society, so that the success of religious moderation does not only depend on government policies, but also requires the support and involvement of the wider community.

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