

## **STRENGTHENING EFFORTS TO RELIGIOUS MODERATION WITH COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE PTKIN ENVIRONMENT OF NORTH SUMATERA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze efforts to strengthen religious moderation in the State Islamic Religious College (PTKIN) environment in North Sumatra through the communication strategies applied. Religious moderation is a very relevant concept in maintaining harmony and harmony between religious communities, especially in the context of campuses that have diverse student backgrounds. This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis to identify the communication strategies applied, the obstacles faced, and the efforts made to overcome these obstacles. The results of the study indicate that PTKIN in North Sumatra have implemented various communication strategies such as curriculum integration based on religious moderation, inclusive learning methods, and the use of social media as a means of continuous education. However, there are still several obstacles, including a lack of in-depth understanding of religious moderation, social and cultural resistance, and limited resources. To overcome these obstacles, continuous training, development of a more relevant curriculum, and optimization of the use of digital technology are needed. This study contributes to the development of more effective communication strategies in strengthening religious moderation in higher education environments, especially in PTKIN North Sumatra.

**Keywords:** Religious Moderation, Communication Strategy, PTKIN North Sumatra.

### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis upaya penguatan moderasi beragama di lingkungan Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri (PTKIN) di Sumatera Utara melalui strategi komunikasi yang diterapkan. Moderasi beragama merupakan konsep yang sangat relevan dalam menjaga kerukunan dan keharmonisan antarumat beragama, khususnya dalam konteks kampus yang memiliki latar belakang mahasiswa yang beragam. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis deskriptif untuk mengidentifikasi strategi komunikasi yang diterapkan, hambatan yang dihadapi, serta upaya yang dilakukan untuk mengatasi hambatan-hambatan tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa PTKIN di Sumatera Utara telah menerapkan berbagai strategi komunikasi seperti integrasi kurikulum berbasis moderasi beragama, metode pembelajaran inklusif, dan penggunaan media sosial sebagai sarana edukasi berkelanjutan. Namun, masih terdapat beberapa kendala, termasuk kurangnya pemahaman mendalam mengenai moderasi beragama, resistensi sosial dan budaya, serta keterbatasan sumber daya. Untuk mengatasi hambatan tersebut, diperlukan

pelatihan berkelanjutan, pengembangan kurikulum yang lebih relevan, serta optimalisasi penggunaan teknologi digital. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan strategi komunikasi yang lebih efektif dalam penguatan moderasi beragama di lingkungan pendidikan tinggi, khususnya di PTKIN Sumatera Utara.

**Kata Kunci:** Moderasi Beragama, Strategi Komunikasi, PTKIN Sumatera Utara.

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with very rich religious, ethnic and cultural diversity. This condition makes Indonesia one of the countries with a high level of plurality,<sup>1</sup> but at the same time vulnerable to inter-religious and inter-cultural conflicts.<sup>2</sup> North Sumatra, as one of the provinces in Indonesia, reflects this diversity with its population. consisting of various religious and ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup> This diversity should be a wealth that enriches the social life of society.<sup>4</sup> However, in reality, this diversity often also triggers conflict and tension. which can threaten social stability and harmony.<sup>5</sup> Several incidents of intolerance and horizontal conflict that have occurred in North Sumatra highlight the importance of strengthening religious moderation as an effort to maintain peace and social unity<sup>6</sup>.

Religious moderation is an approach which emphasizes balance<sup>7</sup> tolerance, and inclusivity in understanding and practicing religious teachings<sup>8</sup>. The goal is to create social

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<sup>1</sup> Hasan Sazali and Ali Mustafa, 'New Media Dan Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia', *Jurnal Komunikasi*, 17.2 (2023), pp. 167–84, doi:10.20885/komunikasi.vol17.iss2.art3.

<sup>2</sup> Theguh Saumantri, 'Aktualisasi Moderasi Beragama Dalam Media Sosial', *MODERATIO: Jurnal Moderasi Beragama*, 3.1 (2023), p. 64, doi:10.32332/moderatio.v3i1.6534.

<sup>3</sup> Toguan Rambe, Mawardi Mawardi, and Seva Mayasari, 'Rumah Moderasi Beragama Di PTKIN: Potret Kebijakan Dan Strategi Mewujudkan Beragama Moderat Di Perguruan Tinggi', *Abrahamic Religions: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama*, 3.2 (2023), p. 214, doi:10.22373/arj.v3i2.19826.

<sup>4</sup> Anggit Fathiera, Badarudin Badarudin, and Aji Heru Muslim, 'MENINGKATKAN KETERAMPILAN BERPIKIR KRITIS DAN GEMAR MEMBACA PESERTA DIDIK MELALUI MODEL PREDICT OBSERVE EXPLAIN BERBASIS LITERASI', *Muallimuna: Jurnal Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 4.2 (2019), p. 92, doi:10.31602/muallimuna.v4i2.1863.

<sup>5</sup> Hufron, 'Penerapan Konsep Komunikasi Dalam Moderasi Beragama Untuk Meningkatkan Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama Di Desa Kayukebek Kecamatan Tukur Kabupaten Pasuruan', *Al-Ittishol: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam*, 5.2 (2024), pp. 307–17, doi:10.51339/ittishol.v5i2.2208.

<sup>6</sup> Ida Bagus Putu Eka Suadnyana, 'Teknik Komunikasi Prajuru Adat Dalam Pelaksanaan Upacara Piodalan Di Pura Kahyangan Tiga', *Communicare*, 3.1 (2022), p. 1, doi:10.55115/communicare.v3i1.2117.

<sup>7</sup> Ahmad Khairul Nuzuli and others, 'Membangun Kesadaran Moderasi Beragama Melalui Strategi Komunikasi Konseling Di Lingkungan Sekolah', *Jurnal Mahasiswa BK An-Nur: Berbeda, Bermakna, Mulia* Volume, 9.1 (2023), pp. 104–13.

<sup>8</sup> Choirul Salim, 'Moderasi Beragama Dalam Bingkai Bhinneka Tunggal Ika Untuk Membentuk Generasi Millennial Ummatan Washatan', *Moderatio: Jurnal Moderasi Beragama*, 3.1 (2023), pp. 34–40, doi:10.32332/moderatio.v3i1.5681.

harmony<sup>9</sup> and prevent extremism that can threaten the integrity of the nation.<sup>10</sup> In this context, religious moderation becomes very important as a foundation for maintaining harmony and tolerance between religious communities.<sup>11</sup> State Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKIN) have a strategic role in efforts to strengthen religious moderation.<sup>12</sup> As a higher education institution that focuses on religious studies,<sup>13</sup> PTKIN not only functions as an academic center, but also as an agent of social change that is committed to promoting the values of moderation and tolerance in society.<sup>14</sup> In North Sumatra, PTKIN plays a key role in shaping moderate understanding and attitudes among students and wider community through various academic and non-academic programs and activities.<sup>15</sup>

Religious moderation is very important in the context of social diversity in North Sumatra because this region is one of the provinces in Indonesia that has a very high level of plurality. North Sumatra is home to various ethnicities, tribes and religions that live side by side in one social community.<sup>16</sup> This diversity creates a rich cultural mosaic, but also creates the potential for conflict and social tension if not managed properly.<sup>17</sup> In a diverse society such as North Sumatra, religious moderation serves as a foundation for creating balance and harmony between religious groups. Religious moderation emphasizes the importance of

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9 Edi Junaedi, 'Moderasi Beragama Dalam Tinjauan Kritis Kebebasan Beragama', *Harmoni*, 21.2 (2022), pp. 330–39, doi:10.32488/harmoni.v21i2.641.

10 Khotibul Umam and others, 'STRATEGI KOMUNIKASI TOKOH AGAMA ISLAM DAN HINDU DALAM MENJAGA KERUKUNAN UMAT BERAGAMA ( STUDI KASUS DI DESA KARANGMULYO KECAMATAN TEGALSARI KABUPATEN BANYUWANGI ) Abstrack Keywords : Communication Strategy , Religious Figures , Religious Harmony Abstrak K', pp. 1–26.

11 Qintannajmia Elvinaro and Dede Syarif, 'Generasi Milenial Dan Moderasi Beragama: Promosi Moderasi Beragama Oleh Peace Generation Di Media Sosial', *JISPO Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik*, 11.2 (2022), pp. 195–218, doi:10.15575/jispo.v11i2.14411.

12 Khasanah N Musyafak N, Munawar I, 'Dissimilarity Implementasi Konsep Moderasi Beragama Di PTKIN', *Prosiding Muktamar Dosen PMII*, September, 2021, pp. 453–64 <<https://prosiding.muktamardosenpmii.com/index.php/mpdpmii/article/view/44%0Ahttps://prosiding.muktamardosenpmii.com/index.php/mpdpmii/article/download/44/34>>.

13 Fira Aulia Aulia and Fathul Arifin, 'Moderasi Beragama Dalam Ruang Digital : Studi Harmonisasi Moderasi Beragama Di Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri', *MODERATIO: Jurnal Moderasi Beragama*, 3.2 (2023), p. 205, doi:10.32332/moderatio.v3i2.8105.

14 Salman Yoga, 'Perubahan Sosial Budaya Masyarakat Indonesia Dan Perkembangan Teknologi Komunikasi', *Jurnal Al-Bayan*, 24.1 (2019), pp. 29–46, doi:10.22373/albayan.v24i1.3175.

15 Rambe, Mawardi, and Mayasari, 'Rumah Moderasi Beragama Di PTKIN: Potret Kebijakan Dan Strategi Mewujudkan Beragama Moderat Di Perguruan Tinggi'.

16 Zuhriah Zuhriah and others, 'Pola Narasi Moderasi Beragama Dalam Pemberitaan Di Bidang Jurnalistik (Analisis Pemberitaan Di Media Pers Sumatera Utara)', *Jurnal Ilmiah Muqoddimah : Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik, Dan Humaniora*, 7.1 (2023), p. 227, doi:10.31604/jim.v7i1.2023.227-233.

17 Abdul Kholid Azhari and others, 'Peran Pengembangan Ekonomi Umat Terhadap Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Dan Kepentingan Kinerja Di Kantor Wilayah Kementerian Agama Provinsi Sumatera Utara Kerukunan Dan Mengatasi Konflik Antar Pemeluk Agama Di Dalam Dan Di Luar Agama . Kepribadian Budaya Lo', 4.1 (2024).

tolerance,<sup>18</sup> respect for differences, and an inclusive attitude in carrying out religious life. With religious moderation, society is expected to be able to live side by side peacefully, without prejudice and discrimination based on religion or belief.<sup>19</sup> In North Sumatra, there are several incidents that can trigger conflicts between religious communities. These conflicts are often triggered by extreme differences in understanding and interpretation of religion. One case of insulting the Batak tribe was carried out by a student, FA Lubis. Religious moderation offers a solution by encouraging mutual respect and cooperation between different religious groups.<sup>20</sup> This is crucial in building a strong foundation for creating an inclusive and harmonious society. Without religious moderation, existing differences can easily be exploited by certain parties for political or group interests, which can ultimately divide society and damage social cohesion.<sup>21</sup>

In addition, religious moderation also plays an important role in forming a strong and cohesive national identity. Indonesia, including North Sumatra, is known for its motto “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika,” which means “different but still one.” Religious moderation helps realize this motto by ensuring that religious differences do not become a source of conflict, but rather a unifying force. In the era of globalization and information as it is today, the threat of radicalism and religious extremism is increasingly real. Religious moderation serves as a fortress that prevents the entry of extreme ideologies that can threaten the security and order of society. By promoting moderate values, such as dialogue, compromise, and understanding, the people of North Sumatra can be more resilient to negative influences from outside that have the potential to divide.

The importance of religious moderation is also seen in the context of social and economic development. A harmonious life between religious communities allows for the creation of a conducive climate for development.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore in depth the efforts to strengthen religious moderation through communication strategies in the State Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKIN) in North Sumatra. This approach was chosen to understand the context, strategies, and implementation carried out by academic institutions in promoting religious moderation. The focus of the research was directed at several PTKINs, such as UIN Syahada Padangsidimpuan, UIN North Sumatra, and STAIN Mandailing Natal,

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18 Cut Fadhara and others, ‘Wujud Moderasi Beragama Di Desa Sei Mencirim, Kecamatan Sunggal, Sumatera Utara’, *MUKADIMAH: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sejarah, Dan Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial*, 5.1 (2022), pp. 43–47, doi:10.30743/mkd.v5i0.4205.

19 Nurhuda, A Lukito, and Masriyah, ‘Effectiveness of Cooperative Learning Instructional Tools With Predict-Observe-Explain Strategy on the Topic of Cuboid and Cube Volume’, *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 947.1–5 (2018), p. 012052, doi:10.1088/1742-6596/947/1/012052.

20 Manggala Wiriya Tantra and others, ‘Implementasi Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Di Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya’, 29.September (2024), pp. 144–55.

21 Rholand Muary, ‘Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Bagi Aparatur Sipil Negara (ASN) Kementerian Agama Dan Tokoh Lintas Agama Di Sumatera Utara’, *Pelita Masyarakat*, 4.1 (2022), pp. 62–75, doi:10.31289/pelitamasyarakat.v4i1.7748.

as representatives of the research area.

The data collection techniques used included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, document studies, and focus group discussions (FGD). Interviews were conducted with various parties, such as lecturers, education staff, and students, to explore religious moderation programs and the effectiveness of the communication strategies implemented. Participatory observation was conducted by attending relevant activities, such as seminars, training, and religious discussions on campus. In addition, official documents, such as institutional policies, activity guidelines, and annual reports, were also analyzed to enrich the research data.

The results of this study are expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of communication strategies in strengthening religious moderation in the PTKIN environment. In addition, this study also aims to provide relevant recommendations for the development of religious moderation policies and programs in religious institutions, especially in the North Sumatra region. The findings of this study are expected to be an important contribution to strengthening the values of religious moderation in the academic world.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **PTKIN Communication Strategy in Strengthening Religious Moderation**

The communication strategy used by PTKIN in North Sumatra includes several complementary approaches to achieve the goal of strengthening religious moderation

The educational communication approach is the main strategy implemented by PTKIN in North Sumatra to strengthen religious moderation among the academic community. This approach focuses on the dissemination and internalization of religious moderation values through formal and non-formal education. PTKIN integrates the concept of religious moderation into the curriculum of courses such as Islamic Religion and Citizenship Education, with the aim of forming an understanding of tolerance between religious communities. In addition, seminars, discussions, and public lectures with religious figures are also held to increase student awareness of the importance of moderation.

To deepen understanding, PTKIN also holds training in managing religious and cultural-based conflicts, as well as community service programs that involve students interacting with the local community. Through these activities, students are invited to implement the values of religious moderation practically and foster an attitude of empathy in building harmonious relationships between individuals. This educational approach aims to shape the character of students who are not only academically intelligent, but also critical and open to differences, creating an inclusive and tolerant campus atmosphere.

The use of social media is a very effective strategy in efforts to strengthen religious moderation in the PTKIN North Sumatra environment. Social media, with its wide reach and ability to spread information quickly, allows messages of religious moderation to be received by various groups, especially the younger generation who are very active in cyberspace. PTKIN utilizes platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to spread the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and the importance of peaceful coexistence between religious communities. The content uploaded includes educational videos, articles,

infographics, and inspirational quotes that illustrate the importance of moderation in religious life. This allows PTKIN to reach a wider audience, both on and off campus, especially among the younger generation who are more likely to access information through digital media.

In addition, PTKIN also uses social media to hold social campaigns aimed at raising awareness of religious moderation. These campaigns often involve students as agents of change who can spread messages creatively and persuasively to their peers through posts, videos, and online discussions. One example of a campaign that is often carried out is #ReligiousModeration, which invites social media users to share their personal experiences or opinions regarding the importance of interfaith tolerance. Through the use of easy-to-remember hashtags, PTKIN is able to build collective awareness among students and the general public regarding the importance of maintaining peace and harmony between religions.

The use of social media also strengthens student involvement in religious moderation activities. PTKIN often holds discussions and webinars through online platforms such as Zoom or YouTube Live, which can be accessed by students and the wider community. These activities present various speakers who have knowledge and experience in promoting religious moderation, both from academics, religious figures, and social activists. These discussions not only discuss issues surrounding intolerance, but also provide practical solutions on how to build a more inclusive and harmonious society. By using social media as a means to disseminate information, PTKIN can increase interaction between individuals from different backgrounds and expand the positive impact of the messages of religious moderation that are conveyed.

Participatory communication is a strategy that actively involves all parties in the communication process, especially in the context of strengthening religious moderation at PTKIN North Sumatra. In this case, students are not only recipients of information, but also play a role as actors who participate in designing, disseminating, and implementing messages of religious moderation. PTKIN encourages students to be involved in various activities that focus on interfaith tolerance, such as interfaith discussions, social activities, and conflict management training. This approach provides space for students to dialogue, share experiences, and jointly seek solutions to problems related to intolerance and extremism.

In this activity, students interact directly with the local community, facilitate discussions, and help resolve social issues related to religious and cultural differences. Through this approach, it is hoped that a sense of mutual respect and understanding will be created between different religious groups, as well as strengthening awareness of the importance of peaceful coexistence. Participatory communication enables the creation of an inclusive and harmonious environment, where each individual feels valued and has a voice in shaping a better social order.

Collaborative communication emphasizes cooperation between various parties in achieving common goals, especially in strengthening religious moderation at PTKIN North Sumatra. This approach involves collaboration between academics, religious leaders, and the community to formulate effective strategies in promoting tolerance and harmony between religious communities. PTKIN organizes various joint activities, such as seminars, training, and discussions that involve participation from various parties. With this collaboration,

information and ideas related to religious moderation can be disseminated more widely, creating synergy in realizing a more inclusive and harmonious society.

In addition, collaborative communication also plays an important role in creating joint solutions to social problems that arise due to intolerance between religious communities. PTKIN collaborates with religious institutions, government, and civil society organizations to develop programs that support the strengthening of religious moderation. This collaboration allows for richer sharing of resources, knowledge, and experiences, and expands the reach of the impact of these activities. With collaborative communication, PTKIN can create a more open, inclusive, and diversity-supporting academic environment, so that religious moderation can be implemented more effectively in everyday life.

### **Obstacles in Strengthening Religious Moderation**

There are a number of obstacles faced by PTKIN in North Sumatra in efforts to strengthen religious moderation, namely

The lack of comprehensive understanding of religious moderation among the academic community at PTKIN North Sumatra is one of the main challenges in strengthening religious moderation. Although the concept of religious moderation is widely known, many individuals only understand moderation superficially and are unable to integrate it into their daily lives, both in personal and social contexts. Some students and lecturers still see religious moderation as a concept that is limited to certain religious teachings without understanding how this moderation can be applied in interacting with people from different religious backgrounds. As a result, there is still potential for tension and misunderstanding between religious communities, which can foster attitudes of intolerance.

This lack of comprehensive understanding is also caused by the lack of educational programs that comprehensively integrate religious moderation. Many PTKIN have not fully adopted a comprehensive educational approach to disseminating the values of religious moderation, both in the classroom and in community service activities. Without a deep understanding of moderation, both in theory and practice, students and academics will have difficulty in building attitudes of tolerance and managing constructive religious-based conflicts. Therefore, more intensive efforts are needed to introduce and teach religious moderation comprehensively so that the values of tolerance can be firmly embedded in the academic and social life of the community.

Cultural and social resistance are significant challenges in strengthening religious moderation at PTKIN North Sumatra. Communities and individuals are often bound by values and traditions that they have long held, which can conflict with the principles of religious moderation. Cultures that prioritize a single truth or a narrow understanding of religion often result in resistance to moderate ideas that emphasize pluralism and tolerance. In academic environments, students and faculty with strong cultural backgrounds may find it difficult to accept more open views towards religious differences, which can lead to tensions or resistance to efforts at religious moderation integration.

In addition, social resistance also arises due to stereotypes and prejudices that have long developed in society. For example, distrust of other religious groups or difficulty in accepting differences in religious views often become barriers to building inclusive and collaborative communication. In many cases, this social tension can exacerbate polarization

between religious communities and exacerbate intolerant practices. Therefore, a more effective and sensitive communication strategy to the social and cultural conditions in each region is essential to overcome this resistance and encourage acceptance of the values of religious moderation.

Budget and resource limitations are one of the main obstacles in implementing strategies to strengthen religious moderation at PTKIN North Sumatra. Many universities face challenges in terms of financing for educational programs and activities that support religious moderation, such as seminars, training, and community service. These limited funds often cause activities designed to educate students and the community about religious moderation to be hampered or even unable to be implemented optimally. In addition, limited human resources, such as teaching staff trained in religious moderation issues, also reduce the effectiveness of the programs being run.

In addition to budget and human resource issues, limited infrastructure is also a inhibiting factor in the development of religious moderation programs. Some PTKIN may not have adequate facilities or technology to support communication activities involving various parties, such as online seminars, interactive training, or effective social media campaigns. This condition causes some programs to have to be adjusted to the available budget, which in turn can reduce the impact and scope of these activities. To overcome this problem, creative efforts are needed in designing programs with existing resources, as well as establishing partnerships with external parties to obtain additional support in implementing strategies to strengthen religious moderation.

The challenge in utilizing technology to strengthen religious moderation at PTKIN North Sumatra arises because of the gap in access and understanding of technology among the academic community. Although technology, especially social media, can be a very effective tool for spreading the values of religious moderation, not all students or lecturers have sufficient skills to utilize it optimally. Some individuals may feel uncomfortable or unfamiliar with using digital platforms to share knowledge and discuss religious issues. This can hinder PTKIN's ability to utilize technology as an inclusive and broad means of communication, which can reach many parties in a short time.

### **Overcoming Barriers to Strengthening Religious Moderation**

Training and capacity building are key to ensuring that efforts to strengthen religious moderation can be carried out effectively at PTKIN North Sumatra. Without proper training, there is no guarantee that the academic community will understand and apply the principles of religious moderation in their daily lives. Training that focuses on developing an attitude of tolerance and understanding of religious differences will help students and lecturers overcome stereotypes or prejudices that they may have. In addition, training designed to equip participants with effective communication skills in an interfaith context will facilitate constructive dialogue and reduce the potential for conflict arising from differences in religious views.

In the context of PTKIN, intensive training can be carried out by involving various experts in the field of religious moderation and interfaith communication. This training program is not only limited to students, but also to lecturers and other educators who have an

important role in creating an inclusive and tolerant campus environment. For example, by holding a workshop on religion-based conflict management, lecturers can learn to handle differences of opinion in the classroom or in social interactions between religious groups. This training can also cover topics such as strengthening critical attitudes towards hoax news and invalid information, which often exacerbate inter-religious tensions.

PTKIN needs to ensure that existing programs have a broad impact and can be accepted by all elements of the academic community, so that religious moderation is not just a theory, but becomes part of the campus culture that supports diversity and harmony between religious communities. This training and capacity building also opens up opportunities to strengthen collaboration with various external parties, such as government institutions, civil society organizations, and religious institutions, in order to create stronger synergy in efforts to strengthen religious moderation in higher education environments. The application of project-based learning models and community service is an effective strategy to integrate religious moderation theory with direct practice in the field. In the context of PTKIN North Sumatra, this model can provide students with real experience in applying the values of religious moderation in everyday life. For example, students can be given the task of developing a project related to harmony between religious communities in society. This project can involve students in working with various religious groups, identifying existing challenges, and designing solutions that focus on respecting differences and building solidarity. In this way, students not only learn from books, but also from direct social experiences, which makes their understanding of religious moderation deeper and contextual.

In addition, community service is an important means to involve students in activities that have a direct impact on the surrounding community. Through community service programs, students can implement the knowledge they gain about religious moderation in real-world situations. For example, PTKIN can organize activities that involve students in holding seminars or workshops in villages around the campus that discuss the importance of tolerance and coexistence between religious communities. This service program not only provides benefits to the community, but also strengthens students' character by equipping them with the social skills needed to face the challenges of interacting with diverse communities.

Community service programs based on project-based learning models can also facilitate the creation of collaboration between students, lecturers, and the community in achieving common goals. In its implementation, lecturers act as mentors who guide students in designing and implementing projects that focus on strengthening religious moderation. In addition, the community is also involved in project planning, so that they feel ownership and responsibility for the success of the program. Through this collaborative approach, students learn to work in teams, respect different perspectives, and solve problems creatively. Overall, the implementation of project-based learning models and community service can strengthen the relationship between PTKIN and the community, and provide a real contribution to strengthening religious moderation. The development of an inclusive and relevant curriculum for strengthening religious moderation at PTKIN North Sumatra is a strategic step to ensure that the values of religious moderation are internalized in the education process. An inclusive curriculum not only includes teaching materials about a particular religion, but also

introduces and respects differences in religion, culture, and worldview that exist in society. In this case, PTKIN can integrate the topic of religious moderation in various courses, such as Citizenship Education, Religion, Social Sciences, and Religious Studies. The materials provided can include basic theories of religious moderation, practices of peaceful coexistence, and case studies from various successful community experiences in building harmony between religious communities. Thus, students gain a more comprehensive understanding of the importance of moderation in everyday life.

The importance of developing an inclusive curriculum also lies in its ability to shape students' attitudes and behavior in social life. A curriculum that touches on social and cultural aspects will be more effective in instilling values of tolerance and mutual respect. One way to achieve this is by holding projects based on interfaith collaboration in an academic context. For example, students can be invited to conduct research together with colleagues from different religions or cultural backgrounds, develop social projects that support diversity, or participate in activities that bring students together with communities outside the campus. With the active involvement of students in these activities, the values of religious moderation can be learned directly and applied in real life, making them more prepared to play an active role in promoting harmony between religious communities in society. Increasing the use of social media and digital technology for ongoing education is one strategy that can expand the reach of strengthening religious moderation, especially among the younger generation who are more familiar with technology. PTKIN in North Sumatra can utilize various social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube to disseminate information that supports religious moderation. Through this platform, various academic activities, seminars, discussions, or community service programs related to religious moderation can be shared widely with the public. In addition, PTKIN can also create educational content in the form of videos, infographics, articles, and podcasts that discuss the importance of tolerance, harmony, and ways to avoid extremism and intolerance. In this way, messages of religious moderation can be spread more quickly and effectively to a wider audience, even outside the campus environment.

In addition, the use of digital technology allows for more intense and participatory interactions between academics and the community. PTKIN can facilitate online discussions or webinars involving experts, religious figures, and the wider community to discuss current issues regarding religious moderation and diversity. This digital platform allows active participation from various parties, not only those in certain locations, but also those in more distant areas. Students and the community can ask questions, share opinions, and discuss directly with speakers. This will enrich their understanding of the importance of moderation in religious life, as well as strengthen their involvement in promoting these values in real life.

Digital technology also allows PTKIN to develop more interactive and engaging curricula and learning materials. For example, in online learning or e-learning, students can access materials covering topics of religious moderation more flexibly and at their own pace. The use of this technology also opens up opportunities to create a broader learning community, where students from various regions or countries can discuss and share experiences regarding religious moderation. By increasing the use of social media and digital technology, PTKIN can not only provide broader and more effective education, but also teach

students how to interact with various religious and cultural groups constructively in the digital world.

### **Discussion**

The communication strategy implemented by the State Islamic Religious College (PTKIN) in strengthening religious moderation in North Sumatra shows a continuous effort in promoting the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and harmony between religious communities. One approach used is through curriculum integration based on the values of religious moderation. This curriculum is designed not only to teach students about religion theoretically, but also to develop inclusive and tolerant attitudes. The use of various learning methods, such as seminars, public lectures, and discussions, provides space for students to dialogue about contemporary issues related to intolerance and extremism. Through this approach, PTKIN plays an active role in shaping the character of students who are not only academically intelligent, but also mature in interacting with the social diversity around them.

However, in its implementation, PTKIN faces various obstacles in strengthening religious moderation. One of the main obstacles is the lack of comprehensive understanding of religious moderation, both among students and the academic community. Religious moderation is often understood narrowly and only as an attitude of tolerance towards other religious groups, whereas religious moderation includes an open attitude towards differences in various aspects of life. This obstacle can be caused by low literacy about the importance of the values of moderation in social life, as well as a lack of in-depth understanding of how to practice moderation in daily interactions. In addition, PTKIN must also face the challenge of cultural and social resistance from some people who are still trapped in an exclusive mindset and prefer a sectarian attitude. This can affect the acceptance of programs aimed at strengthening religious moderation. In addition, limited budget and resources are also significant obstacles in strengthening religious moderation. Procurement of activities that require intensive training, international seminars, or collaboration with various institutions requires a lot of funds. Limited human resources, especially in terms of lecturers and teaching staff who have competence in the field of religious moderation, are also a challenge. In this context, PTKIN needs to innovate in finding alternative resources, such as collaborating with private institutions, religious organizations, and the government to fund and support programs related to strengthening religious moderation. To overcome these obstacles, PTKIN needs to develop a more inclusive and sustainable approach, one of which is by increasing training and capacity building for lecturers and teaching staff. Routine training based on concrete religious moderation practices will make it easier for them to teach and instill the values of moderation to students. In addition, the development of social media and digital technology as a means of education can be a solution to overcome geographical and resource limitations. By using digital platforms, PTKIN can reach a wider audience without being hampered by high costs. Interesting and interactive educational content can help students and the wider community to understand and implement religious moderation in everyday life. Overall, although PTKIN in North Sumatra faces various challenges in strengthening religious moderation, strategic steps taken in developing curriculum, training, and utilizing digital technology can be a solution to overcome these obstacles. The success of implementing this strategy is highly dependent on collaboration between the academic

community, the community, and other related parties in creating a more inclusive and tolerant environment. Strengthening religious moderation through education based on an effective communication approach that is relevant to the social dynamics in society is expected to form a young generation that not only understands diversity, but is also active in building harmony and peace amidst differences.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that PTKIN in North Sumatra has made various strategic efforts in strengthening religious moderation through effective communication. Integration of moderation values in the education curriculum, use of inclusive learning methods, and utilization of social media and digital technology are the main keys in introducing and implementing religious moderation among academics. In addition, community service programs that involve students in direct activities in the field, both with the community and between religious communities, further strengthen the concept of moderation built on campus. This creates a more open, inclusive academic atmosphere that can accommodate diversity.

However, this study also identified various obstacles that hinder the strengthening of religious moderation, such as a lack of in-depth understanding of religious moderation, cultural and social resistance, budget constraints, and challenges in utilizing technology. These obstacles require serious attention so that the program to strengthen religious moderation can run more optimally. Therefore, it is important for PTKIN to continue to strengthen internal capacity through ongoing training for lecturers and teaching staff, as well as expanding collaboration networks with various external parties that can provide support in the form of resources and funds.

Overall, efforts to strengthen religious moderation at PTKIN North Sumatra through a planned and collaborative communication strategy have shown significant progress. However, to achieve maximum results, PTKIN needs to overcome existing obstacles with a more creative and sustainable approach. The use of digital technology, the development of a more relevant and inclusive curriculum, and more intensive training will greatly support the achievement of the goal of strengthening religious moderation in the academic environment. Through these steps, it is hoped that PTKIN can produce a generation that is not only academically intelligent, but also has an attitude of tolerance and respect for differences in society.

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