

## Empowerment of Islamic Religious Extension Workers in Improving Religious Services in Simpang Ulim District, East Aceh Regency

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Diajukan: 05-02-2024	Diterima: 20-06-2024	Diterbitkan: 30-06-2024
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### Article History

Received : 05-02-2024

Revised : 20-06-2024

Published: 30-06-2024

### Keywords:

Islamic Religious Counselor;  
Society service;  
Empowerment

### Kata Kunci:

Penyuluh Agama Islam;  
Pelayanan Masyarakat;  
Pemberdayaan

### ABSTRACT

*This research aims to evaluate the Joint Decree of the Minister of Religion and the Head of the State Civil Service Agency Number 574 of 1999 and Number 178 of 1999 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of the Functional Position of Religious Counselors and Their Credit Scores. Factors that encourage and hinder Islamic Religious Counselors in carrying out their duties and functions. Assessing the implementation of the duties of Islamic Religious Counselors in the community. This research was carried out in stages from April to May 2023 in Kec. Simpang Ulim District, East Aceh. Data collection methods were carried out by interviews, FGD, and documentation studies. The research results show that Islamic Religious Counselors understand Joint Decree Numbers 574 and 178 of 1999, but have not consistently carried out their duties. Empowering extension workers needs to be carried out considering that human resources are very limited and have not been optimal in carrying out the task of religious extension in society. So far, the number of Islamic religious instructors has not been comparable to the population in Simpang Ulim District, East Aceh Regency. Monitoring from the central Ministry of Religion to extension workers and the target community is not carried out so the results cannot be known in the community. Then, the facilities and infrastructure prepared by the government are very limited, thus hampering the performance of extension workers in the field.*

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi Keputusan Bersama Menteri Agama dan Kepala Badan Kepegawaian Negara Nomor 574 Tahun 1999 dan Nomor 178 Tahun 1999 tentang Petunjuk Pelaksanaan Jabatan Fungsional Penyuluh Agama dan Angka Kreditnya. Faktor-faktor yang mendorong dan menghambat Penyuluh Agama Islam dalam menjalankan tugas dan fungsinya. Menilai pelaksanaan tugas para Penyuluh Agama Islam di masyarakat. penelitian ini dilakukan secara bertahap mulai bulan April sampai Mei 2023 di Kec. Simpang Ulim Kab. Aceh Timur. Metode pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan wawancara, FGD, dan studi dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Penyuluh Agama Islam memahami Keputusan Bersama Nomor 574 dan 178 tahun 1999, namun belum secara konsisten menjalankan tugasnya. Pemberdayaan penyuluh perlu dilakukan mengingat

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SDM-nya sangat terbatas dan belum maksimal dalam menjalankan tugas penyuluhan agama di masyarakat. Selama ini jumlah penyuluh Agama Islam belum sebanding dengan jumlah penduduk yang ada di Kecamatan Simpang Ulim Kabupaten Aceh Timur. Monitoring dari Kementerian Agama pusat kepada para penyuluh dan masyarakat binaan tidak dilakukan sehingga belum dapat diketahui hasilnya di masyarakat. Kemudian, sarana dan prasarana yang disiapkan oleh pemerintah sangat terbatas sehingga menghambat kinerja para penyuluh di lapangan.

## **Introduction**

Islamic Religious Extension Officers are officials of the Ministry of Religion who function to carry out the duties and functions of the Ministry of Religion at the lowest level, so that Islamic Religious Extension Officers act as the spearhead of the Ministry of Religion. As the spearhead, Islamic Religious Extension Workers have an important role in dealing with problems in society so that a group of people becomes independent. (Joint Decree (SKB) of the Minister of Religion and Head of BKN Number 574 of 1999 and Number 178 of 1999).

In improving the quality of religious life services, Islamic Religious Extension Workers have a very important role. PAI has a real role and function, increasingly strategic and urgently needed, because as a spearhead in handling various problems that arise in society, therefore religious publications throughout Indonesia must be improved.

Various problems that often arise in Simpang Ulim District, East Aceh Regency, for example: theft, online gambling, adultery, divorce, use of illegal drugs, pornography and pornography. In addition, problems about aqidah are also still encountered such as the existence of heretical schools and even religious problems. For this reason, the role of extension workers who do not know time and place is needed by the community. However, it seems that the role of extension workers (PAI) has not been maximized, this can be known from various information from the community.

To clearly see the role of Islamic Religious Extension Workers in society, so that it is not as expressed by the community, formally the development of Islamic Religious Extension Workers needs to be carried out by the Ministry of Religion so that it can ensure the improvement of the quality of human resources of Islamic Religious Extension Workers and ensure an increase in the rank, professionalism, and performance of extension workers. For this reason, efforts to foster Islamic Religious Extension Workers in Simpang Ulim District,

East Aceh Regency are absolutely necessary. From the results of several studies on Islamic Religious Extension Workers, the extension workers received invitations to participate in extension development activities, both organized by the Central Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion of Aceh Province, and the East Aceh Regency Ministry of Religion with various themes, such as sakinah family, Qur'anic illiteracy, religious harmony, halal products, zakat, waqf, hajj and others.

However, the efforts to develop Islamic Religious Extension Workers are not considered to be optimal because not all extension workers get this opportunity due to limited costs and others. Extension workers are still inadequate when compared to the number of extension objects. The target of counseling is generally still limited to the talim assembly and recitation groups only. This study also revealed a number of inhibiting factors for the role and function of extension workers, namely: the absence of extension work groups, the lack of capacity building programs for extension workers, and the absence of operational costs in carrying out extension work.

Based on the description above, it seems that the problem of religious extension workers has not moved from two main things, namely the limitation of human resources for extension workers and the lack of facilities and facilities to support the task of extension workers.

### **Implementation Method**

Research method used in community service activities "Socialization of the Implementation of the Halal Product Guarantee Law for the Community at Al Iman Mosque, Pucangan Village". The research method applied in the community service program, namely using Participatory Action Research (PAR), is to actively involve the community in the research process to identify problems and find solutions together. In carrying out their duties, the Islamic Religious Extension Officers seemed enthusiastic, especially related to the illumination of religious issues. The extension workers also provide guidance related to religious issues, both to children, teenagers and the elderly.

Religious counseling emphasizes more on the implementation of ritual worship and Sufism. The Islamic guidance and counseling methods carried out by the extension workers are carried out by several methods including lectures, discussions, questions and answers and visits to landfills or recitations.

The method often used by Islamic Religious Extension Officers for children's groups uses the lecture and face-to-face method. As for the activities of the teenagers, in addition to using the lecture method, they also use projector media. The material delivered by the extension workers was relatively varied. When Islamic Religious Extension Workers deal with children, what is presented is iqra material, introduction to tajweed laws in the reading of the Qur'an and the basics of Islam. When dealing with teenagers, the material presented was about Islam, the dangers of drugs, the characteristics of false teachings and the lifestyle of urban teenagers. Meanwhile, the recitation for mothers and fathers is filled with fiqh and Sufism studies.

For halal products, the source of data was obtained through direct interviews with the head of KUA Simpang Ulim District, Islamic religious extension workers in the field of halal products, and business actors, namely production house owners.

## **Results and Discussion**

The service program held by the Faculty of Sharia from Raden Mas Said State Islamic University Surakarta on June 11, 2023 at the Al Iman Mosque, Pucangan Village, Kartasura, is a tangible manifestation of one of the principles of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, namely community service. This initiative is designed to disseminate information about the implementation of the Halal Product Assurance Law (JPH Law) among the residents of Pucangan Village, which includes small and medium entrepreneurs as well as Muslim consumers

Islamic Religious Extension Workers are guides among Muslims. The main task of Islamic religious extension workers is to carry out religious counseling, prepare and prepare programs, implement and report and evaluate or monitor the results of implementation, provide guidance and consultation, provide direction in increasing piety, religious harmony and participation in the success of development as well as activities in the form of reading the letters of the Qur'an and tahlil then at the end of the implementation of these activities the religious extension officer provides guidance or delivering lectures to the community about values or life related to family. Its existence is very important in the midst of the development of the times in today's era, social problems such as divorce, conflict, and even

violence in the smallest society, namely the family, is one of the tasks of Islamic Religious Extension Officers.

Islamic religious extension workers also play a role as a person who provides counseling or commonly called pre-marital guidance. Pre-marriage guidance itself is carried out at the time after the husband and wife register themselves at KUA, the first guidance is with the Islamic religious extension officer asking the prospective husband and wife to describe the subject matter related to the guidance to be delivered.

The main material is usually that prospective husbands and wives are told to explain their knowledge about the main points of worship, daily prayers, fiqh munahakat, taharah, to the obligations of husbands and wives.

The goal is to find out about the extent of knowledge possessed by the prospective wife and husband. Furthermore, religious extension workers provide materials on preparing a strong marriage towards a sakinah family, mawadah, warahmah, and applicable norms and explain the rights of husband and wife in the family, but in addition to pre-marriage guidance we also conduct counseling or prevention of husband and wife conflicts.

Because in addition to providing good direction and guidance, the counseling provided is able to provide prospective brides with knowledge that there must be behaviors that should not be done in the Islamic religion related to fostering family relationships.

Figure 1. Guidance of Catin (Bride-to-be) Women



Because with this guidance, it can add to the insight of the bride-to-be related to how to manage conflicts in the family, how to establish good communication, and how to solve a problem.

Figure 2. Guidance of the Women's Catin



The guidance or lectures provided by the Islamic religious extension officer at the KUA of Simpang Ulim District to the community certainly play a positive role for the listeners. Because in these lectures, Islamic religious extension workers often deliver material related to family life. Just like the material about the duty of a husband and wife is to take care of the family from the torment of hell. The material explained that there needs to be cooperation between husband and wife to create a *sakinah* family in order to avoid the torment of hell, namely by avoiding conflicts and educating their wives and children on the path that is pleased by Allah SWT.

The Qur'an is the light of human life, reading it will bring great goodness and virtue. Reading the Qur'an is not only a charity and worship but also an antidote for people who are disturbed in their souls. Reading the Qur'an is a high-value worship before Allah SWT. Thus, eradicating Qur'anic illiteracy means reducing and eliminating the number of Qur'anic illiteracy in a person so that they can understand, understand and can be a guideline in living life. In the implementation of religious development activities, an Islamic religious extension worker must have an appropriate and systematic strategy such as da'wah, Iqra and tajweed by including between the extension worker and the community environment so that there is a change in behavior for the better.

Figure 3. Al-Qur'an Illiteracy Development Activities



How to teach it starts by introducing hijaiyah letters, then the punctuation marks are spelled or explained slowly. After mastering, they are taught to read Q.S Al-Fatihah, An-Nas, Al-Falaq, Al-Ikhlash and so on. The results of the evaluation can be used as material for Islamic religious extension workers in improving and perfecting learning programs and activities.

Halal product counseling is one of the eight main tasks of non-civil servant Islamic religious extension workers which has been regulated in the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance No. 298 of 2017 concerning Guidelines for Non-Civil Servant Islamic Religious Extension Workers. The holding of this halal product counseling is in connection with the government's efforts to maintain the comfort of Muslim consumers in consuming products circulating in Indonesia which has been regulated in Law

of the Republic of Indonesia No. 33 of 2014 concerning halal product guarantees.

Figure 4. Counseling Visit for Halal Products for Tempeh Production



In its implementation, halal product counseling is charged to extension workers assigned to each KUA in all sub-districts in Indonesia. The methods used in this halal product counseling are three, namely: study, technical guidance and workshops. Among these three methods, recitation is the most frequently used method. In the implementation of halal product counseling with the study method, the extension worker on duty will deliver material to business actors in the form of lectures and questions and answers, with the target of the general public and the focus is to build awareness of halal consumption. Meanwhile, technical guidance and workshops are usually held for counseling on halal certification for MSME actors or traders. The low participation of the community in participating in halal product counseling is influenced by various factors, such as the existence of other activities or work held at the same time as halal product counseling activities at the taklim council.

Figure 5. Counseling Visit for Halal Products for Noodle Production



As is the case in the case of the spread of heresy, the spread of this heresy occurs not only among the general public, but also occurs in various institutions, especially educational institutions, both secondary and tertiary levels. The Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI) itself has issued a list of nine schools of belief that are considered misleading since 1989. The nine schools that are considered misleading include Jamaah Islam, Ahmadiyya, Sunnah Denial, Holy Qur'an, Bilingual Prayer, Lia Eden and Sempalan. Countering Splinter Streams through the process of visits, lectures in the community and extracurricular learning It has been explained that extracurricular forums that routinely carry out student faith development include anticipating so that students do not get involved in deviant flows.

Figure 6. Counseling Visit for Cults



## Conclusion

Religious counseling activities are very important to carry out for

extension workers, this is due to the limited human resources of religious extension workers and other supporting tools. empowerment for Islamic Religious Extension Workers needs to continue to be carried out by the Ministry of Religion at the City Regency Level through education and trainings, workshops, and workshops that are tiered according to the expertise of extension workers who can help solve problems in the community

The community still wants religious extension activities, because when there are still religious extension workers, the government is considered to still care about the religious life of its people. This method can certainly build harmony with the community, besides also aiming to establish good communication in order to create a conducive situation, so that religious extension workers in carrying out their duties in inviting and convincing the community can run well.

Other obstacles in the implementation of halal product counseling in Simpang Ulim District are limited funds, limited human resources and low level of community participation in participating in halal product counseling. The existence of these obstacles more or less affects the effectiveness of halal product counseling in the KUA of Simpang Ulim District. The Ministry of Religion of East Aceh Regency can improve the coaching process for extension workers and evaluate every activity carried out by religious extension workers, this is the right step to improve the professionalism of extension workers in carrying out their duties to build a civil society.

### **Acknowledgments**

We express our deep gratitude to the Head of KUA Simpang Ulim who has supported and funded this service activity so that it is carried out well for this activity. Without their help and cooperation, the organization of this event would not have been possible. Their support is not only in the form of material, but also in the thought and passion to advance education and religious activities in our environment.

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