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**Public Diplomacy in ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp (AYIC)  
to Develop Indonesia's Image in ASEAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

This research focuses on Indonesia's influential position in ASEAN and its image, considering both strengths and weaknesses. Despite being known for natural beauty and cultural richness, the country faces challenges that affect how it is perceived globally. The study examines the ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp (AYIC) as a public diplomacy tool aimed at enhancing Indonesia's image. Through qualitative research, using official documents and interviews, the study explores how AYIC contributes to projecting Indonesia as a tolerant and harmonious nation. The research sheds light on the program's success in dispelling religious stereotypes, ultimately improving Indonesia's international image and advancing its national interests through soft power.

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**INTRODUCTION**

In life, interconnectedness among individuals is a human need as social beings. Similarly, nations, require the involvement of various stakeholders to support their planned goals as part of national aspirations. In this context, diplomacy plays a role in bridging the influence of other countries. According to theory, diplomacy serves five functions, namely representing, protecting, negotiating, ascertaining, and promoting (Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, 1986). These functions aim to build a nation's image and obtain legitimacy by creating attractiveness on the world stage. One type of diplomacy commonly used is public diplomacy (Effendi, 2013).

Public diplomacy is closely related to the promoting function, where it serves as a platform to disseminate certain values to enhance a nation's reputation or address previous shortcomings. Indonesia is also one of the countries that practice public diplomacy as a strategy to achieve national interests. Focusing on Indonesia, this research addresses the promoting aspect, which involves improving previous phenomena in subsequent ones. The background case for this study is the phenomenon of political identity intolerance in Indonesia, which affects the nation's image

in the surrounding region. One significant event related to this is the 212 Movement, which demanded accountability for religious blasphemy by a provincial official. Held on December 2, 2016, the event was attended by at least 823,200 people (Ahmad, 2016). The massive demonstration in the heart of Indonesia's capital triggered chaos and perspectives from various parties. ASEAN is Indonesia's closest circle, ASEAN's identity is grounded in the strong commitment of "One Vision, One Identity, One Community" (ASEAN, 2020). Furthermore, the ASEAN Charter's goals for 2025 include building a peaceful and harmonious community to strengthen collective values of peace (ASEAN, 2021). The political identity action thus contradicts the values of togetherness in ASEAN and affects Indonesia's image in the eyes of ASEAN.

To address negative perspectives and evaluations of the aforementioned case, Indonesia initiated various programs to disseminate positive values about the country. One of these initiatives is the ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp (AYIC), which gathers selected youths from Southeast Asia to strengthen regional dialogues and cooperation. Initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Religious Affairs, and Ministry of Youth and Sports, the AYIC aims to promote tolerance, moderation, and mutual respect.

In the AYIC program, this objective is achieved by providing a platform for the country's best youths to voice their aspirations annually. AYIC also operates within the framework of functional cooperation in ASEAN youth, which supports the ASEAN Declaration on CoP (Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy, and Harmonious Society) initiated and adopted at the 31st ASEAN Summit in November 2017 (R. B. P. K. J. Jakti, 2021). Additionally, there is an ASEAN monitoring matrix related to bodies or ministerial bodies SOMY (Senior Officials Meeting on Youth), SOMS (Senior Officials Meeting on Sports), and SOMED (Senior Official Meeting on Education) (ASEAN, 2022). The main goal is to emphasize community-based efforts to mobilize the youth in their contributions to prevent various social issues in ASEAN, which demonstrates the significance of the AYIC program in channelling ASEAN's aspirations.

Using soft power and public diplomacy theories, this study attempts to explore aspects of diplomacy in the AYIC program. Soft power, according to Joseph Nye is the ability to influence others to achieve desired outcomes through attractiveness without using force, thereby enabling others to willingly fulfil those desires (Nye, 2004). Soft power is also part of the relationship between nations (Gallarotti, 2011). Based on its building factors, soft power is rooted in beauty, benignity, and brilliance, which facilitate a nation's reasoning and strategies to spread its influence (Vuving, 2009). In line with the aforementioned theory, the theory of public diplomacy is also used to analyze how a nation's strategies build its image through societal actors. In brief, public diplomacy can be understood as a process of engaging with a nation's society, aiming to advance and promote national interests while expanding the values it represents (Melissen, 2005). This research intends to fill the research gap regarding the AYIC program and how public diplomacy is executed by a religious program in Indonesia. The previous studies considered are R. B. P. K. Jakti, (2022); Ola & Atasoge (2022); Tiffany & Azmi (2020); Harja (2019); Hanifa (2017); Ma'mun (2012); Amellia et al. (2023). Studies by R. B. P. K. Jakti (2022) and Ola & Atasoge (2022) discussed the role of the AYIC program in promoting religious moderation, tolerance, and mutual respect. Meanwhile, studies by Tiffany & Azmi (2020), Harja (2019), Hanifa (2017),

Amellia et al (2023) and Ma'mun (2012) addressed the role of public diplomacy in government programs in contributing to diplomatic values.

This research aims to address the issue of limited knowledge among ASEAN societies about Indonesia, which is then formulated into three research questions: What is the AYIC program and how is it implemented? What image does Indonesia seek to project? How does AYIC serve as a public diplomacy tool to build Indonesia's image in ASEAN? These three questions will be answered through an analysis of the AYIC program in projecting Indonesia's image and the rise in Indonesia's image index.

## **METHODS**

This research aims to analyse the AYIC program as a tool of Indonesia's public diplomacy to build the country's image in the eyes of ASEAN. To facilitate the analysis and explanation of the above data, a qualitative method is utilized to focus on data collection, allowing for a more detailed analysis of the phenomena under investigation and enabling the researcher to achieve the research objectives. This method is based on the interpretive approach outlined in the book "Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook" (2014), which aims to address research within a sample of events supported by comprehensive facts and data.

The qualitative research method also intends to illustrate how the ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp (AYIC), as the objective of this research, supports national goals as a public diplomacy tool in its unique way. The research design used is a case study, considering the validity and accuracy of the sources used, and interview techniques are employed to enhance the data's credibility from relevant stakeholders. Subsequently, the researcher will conclude from the identified results, emphasizing credible and verifiable sources (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The data sources used consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data refers to data collected for a specific purpose in a particular research problem (Hox & Boeijs, 2005). The primary data in this study are obtained from interviews conducted with representatives of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and delegates who have been part of the ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp (AYIC) event. Additionally, as defined by Thomas P. Vartanian, secondary data refers to data collected previously and being considered for reuse (Vartanian, 2010). Secondary data is obtained through a literature review technique, where all data is acquired indirectly by the researcher, such as strategic plans and performance reports from relevant directorates within the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, media and articles related to AYIC, and other official websites pertaining to AYIC. Validity and reliability are established through triangulation and data coding.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Profile of AYIC

AYIC (ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp) is an annual event initiated by Indonesia within the framework of ASEAN functional cooperation, addressing diversity, tolerance, cooperation, and religious moderation. The event comprises youth discussions focusing on diversity, tolerance, cooperation, and religious moderation, with representatives from each ASEAN country participating. Its objective is to serve as a platform for disseminating religious diversity tolerance in ASEAN and educating and introducing preventive values from each country to foster sustainable development (Unipdu, 2017). AYIC itself is the result of ASEAN's youth cooperation initiative and strategic planning, particularly related to the ASEAN Declaration on Culture of Prevention (CoP) for Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy, and Harmonious Society at the 31st ASEAN Summit in 2017. The program is also recognized as one of the flagship programs of the Senior Officials Meeting on Youth (SOMY) in the work plan for the periods 2016-2020 and 2021-2025 (R. B. P. K. Jakti, 2022). Pictures 1 and 2 are taken from AYIC's activities in the past few years.



Picture 1: AYIC 2022  
Kemenpora (Ministry of Youth and Sports) [source]



Picture 2: AYIC 2021  
Times Indonesia [source]

The outcomes of AYIC include the Jombang Declaration in 2017, which rejects violence in conflict resolution and the politicization of religion. In 2019, the Lombok Declaration was established, committing to embracing diversity for a tolerant way of life. AYIC's 4th edition in 2020 resulted in practical guidelines that can be implemented by governments, communities, and societies. Before AYIC, interfaith-related programs were limited to being conducted by governments and some relevant parties. Through AYIC, Indonesia seeks to expand its target audience and involve the general public in disseminating more comprehensive and widespread information. Vice President of Indonesia, K.H. Ma'ruf Amin, stated that a communication platform is needed to avoid misunderstandings and enhance mutual understanding among communities, especially regarding sensitive issues such as beliefs (Kementerian Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia, 2017). AYIC facilitates communication, particularly regarding beliefs, to achieve a moderate and tolerant way of life. Ultimately, AYIC expands interfaith dialogue from bilateral to encompass the entire ASEAN region, to raise awareness of the importance of tolerance and engage the international public. The collaboration of three ministries the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Religion, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports supports Indonesia's chairmanship in AYIC.

### **Response and Evaluation of AYIC**

After discussing the practices and outcomes of the activities over the years, it can be understood that the AYIC event inevitably produces different outputs each year. This is due to variations in conditions and cooperation priorities. For instance, in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic began to spread in Indonesia, the implementation of AYIC underwent a total transformation to an online platform. This change limited some activities that were typically conducted during AYIC, such as visits to places of worship, direct dialogues with religious figures, and direct community engagements. Although the entire program was reconfigured for virtual implementation, the experiences and outcomes differed from previous years. Nevertheless, it was in 2020 that a considerable number of delegates participated, given the ease and flexibility offered by online meetings, making access more effective for many participants. As a result, the outputs generated were quite distinct from those of previous years. While it is understood that not every year produces a significant declaration or grand movement with extensive impact, AYIC activities still contribute positively to international relations and regional societies through the participation of youth delegates. Hence, the researcher conducted interviews to obtain responses from several delegates about the program's implementation. These interviews were conducted with AYIC participants or delegates from the last event in 2022. To avoid bias towards an event initiated by Indonesia, the researcher selected one delegate from a foreign country and one from Indonesia to gather two contrasting perspectives.

Responses were gathered from Angeilyn Ponsica Antivo, a delegate from the Philippines, and Alessandro Volta Gunady, a delegate from the High Council of Confucianism in Indonesia for AYIC 2022. Both of them actively represented the situation regarding religious tolerance in their respective countries.

*"The AYIC program helped me to understand diverse cultures and different languages can help each other and understand each other through love and compassion towards others"* Angeilyn Antivo

*"The programs were well thought out with great speakers and opportunities to have productive discussions regarding interfaith problems in ASEAN countries and how each country dealt with the problems and if the solutions to the problems are able to be implemented in other ASEAN countries present in the discussions."* Alessandro Volta Gunady

Through the responses from these two sources, it was understood that AYIC activities left a positive impression in efforts to maintain peace and promote tolerance towards differences. Given that the countries in ASEAN are born with diverse cultural backgrounds, this diversity also leads to friction resulting from these differences. Therefore, AYIC serves as a platform for countries to share their respective solutions based on their experiences. Moreover, despite some challenges in adhering to the schedule, the event eventually ran smoothly and achieved its main objective of spreading awareness and educating delegates about tolerance, which they could then disseminate in their home countries.

Regarding the evaluation of AYIC activities, both sources agreed that future events should involve more delegates from diverse religious and belief communities to enhance education about minorities. This emphasis on minorities is necessary as these religious and belief communities are more susceptible to conflicts, making a deeper understanding of these communities essential.

Furthermore, to complement the responses, the researcher also interviewed a direct practitioner involved in AYIC, specifically Ms. Niken Hardiani, a Diplomat Madya for Social and Cultural Cooperation at the ASEAN Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. She was a key organizer representing the Ministry in the collaborative efforts for AYIC. After inquiring about various aspects of AYIC, she highlighted the importance of evaluating impact indicators. According to Ms. Niken,

*“Memang yang perlu dievaluasi itu ada dampak kali ya, dampak penyelenggaraan AYIC untuk meningkatkan kerukunan antar agama di masyarakat ASEAN khususnya yang masih menghadapi isu-isu intoleransi, atau konflik berbasis agama deh simple-nya. Itu kan kita perlu mengevaluasi kira-kira sejauh mana sih kalau pemuda mengikuti AYIC itu bisa meningkatkan awareness masyarakat lainnya untuk mengatasi hal-hal atau isu intoleransi.”*

Summarizing the response of the Diplomat Madya for Social and Cultural Cooperation at ASEAN, she acknowledges that the AYIC event has been successful, but the evaluation is still necessary to further improve the program. Among the aspects that require attention are impacted indicators, which refer to the direct effects felt by the communities. For example, measuring the level of tolerance in ASEAN communities after the implementation of AYIC. Determining the best indicators for qualitative aspects like human tolerance remains challenging. Thus, the measurement of the impact felt by the communities is still not optimally conducted. Ms. Niken hopes that effective methods for realizing impact indicators can be found in the future.

### **Indonesia's Public Diplomacy**

Public diplomacy has been practised by countries worldwide for a long time. Indonesia is one nation that employs public diplomacy as a soft power strategy. The emergence of public diplomacy is driven by globalization and technological advancements, which the Indonesian government utilizes to manage information and promote a positive image of the country. Public diplomacy plays a crucial role in communicating Indonesia's reality both domestically and internationally while maintaining regional stability. It presents Indonesia as a predominantly Muslim country that is moderate, modern, and democratic, highlighting the compatibility between democracy and religion while showcasing its development progress.

Although public diplomacy has a dedicated directorate within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, other departments and directorates also contribute to realizing public diplomacy efforts. For instance, the Directorate of ASEAN Cooperation, while primarily focusing on developing relations and cooperation between Indonesia and ASEAN, actively supports, implements, and develops Indonesia's public diplomacy on the global stage. Returning to Indonesia's position in public diplomacy, the Ministry's vision, "Leading active and effective diplomacy to realize an advanced Indonesia that is sovereign, independent, and characterized by cooperation," emphasizes the importance of diplomacy in all sectors. According to the strategic plan of the Directorate of Public Diplomacy in 2022, strategic objectives are divided into three perspectives to be achieved (Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia, 2022):

1. The Increased positive image of Indonesia in the international arena from a stakeholder perspective.

2. Enhanced promotion of public diplomacy assets from an internal business process perspective.
3. Effective organizational governance within the Directorate of Public Diplomacy from a learning and growth perspective.

Based on these strategic objectives, activities are designed to align with the targets. The outcomes will be measured by key performance indicators (KPIs) formulated based on indices, numbers, and values obtained from each activity. For instance, regarding the stakeholder perspective, the KPI aims to achieve an index of Indonesia's global image (Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia, 2022). As for the internal business process perspective, the indicator is the number of promotions and initiatives involving contributions from international constituents, domestic constituents, and the Indonesian community abroad (Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia, 2022). Through the given example, it is evident that Indonesia's public diplomacy is designed with consideration of current strategic issues, which are then transformed into strategic targets with their respective indicators. Ultimately, public diplomacy is an urgent endeavour in Indonesia to engage the public directly, even down to the grassroots level. It enables the country to involve foreign publics directly in promotional activities to advance national interests. The output of this public diplomacy ultimately leads to an improved image of Indonesia in the eyes of the world.

### **Indonesian Public Diplomacy through the AYIC Program**

As previously mentioned, Indonesian public diplomacy employs various programs and activities as tools to convey its diplomatic efforts. These activities are diverse and can originate from and target various fields. One of the activities serving as a public diplomacy tool, which will be discussed in this research, is the ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp (AYIC) program. The ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp (AYIC) program is one of Indonesia's public diplomacy activities that focus on religious moderation in community life. It is an effective public diplomacy tool because it involves participation from people across ASEAN countries. AYIC facilitates increased cooperation and enhances Indonesia's image through various organized events.

According to Ms Niken Hardiani, a representative of the AYIC organizers, the form of public diplomacy in AYIC, as stated above, involves education through panel discussions and direct participation of delegates in activities at locations that are considered representative of religious moderation in Indonesia. The panel discussions allow Indonesia, as the main host and organizer, to control the topics to be discussed. Examples from Indonesia can be included in these discussions to demonstrate how these topics can be realized. This serves as Indonesia's effort to advocate interfaith dialogue both domestically and internationally. The participants are also invited to visit areas that represent harmonious coexistence in diversity. These locations usually include places of worship or areas with unique cultural richness. For instance, Jakarta, with its cathedral and Istiqlal Mosque, is connected by an Istiqlal-Cathedral tunnel, symbolizing religious tolerance. The discussions aim to showcase Indonesia's endeavours to promote tolerance for the common welfare. The participants get a firsthand experience of seeing believing, and witnessing Indonesia's wealth and ability to live harmoniously amidst diversity.

In summary, Indonesian public diplomacy in the AYIC program is achieved through education in panel discussions and visits to locations representing harmonious coexistence amidst diversity. Through panel discussions, Indonesia, as the host, can control the topics and provide examples of

Indonesia's efforts in promoting tolerance, such as through interfaith dialogue. Participants are invited to visit areas that exemplify harmonious living, such as Jakarta's cathedral and Istiqlal Mosque, including the Istiqlal-Cathedral tunnel as a symbol of religious tolerance. These two forms of public diplomacy aim to influence the participants to understand Indonesia's positive aspects and enhance Indonesia's global image. The evidence and education presented are expected to leave a lasting impression and change the participants' perspective on Indonesia.

### **Strengthening the image of Indonesia in ASEAN**

#### ***Indonesian Image in ASEAN***

Indonesia is the largest country in Southeast Asia. With such a title, it inevitably attracts various speculations and perspectives from communities within the region. Based on the data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia's Directorate of Public Diplomacy's performance report in 2022, it is reported that Indonesia's international image scale in the Main Performance Indicator (MPI) is targeted at 3.90 out of a scale of 5 (Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia, 2022). This scale is derived from a series of surveys conducted by all Indonesian representatives abroad, excluding the Permanent Mission of Indonesia to International Organizations (PTRI). The data shows that Indonesia's image index as of December 31, 2022, is 4.06, achieving 104.10% of the target with 12,806 respondents completing the survey (Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia, 2022). This means that it surpasses the initial target of 3.90, increasing by 0.16 index to 4.06 on a scale of 5. The increase in Indonesia's positive image scale on the world stage indicates an improvement. According to the interval and category of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs MPI index in its 2022 performance report, the meaning or understanding of the above achievement is as follows:

<b>Interval</b>	<b>Indeks Category</b>	<b>Indeks Scale</b>
<b>0 – 16,67</b>	Very Bad	0
<b>16,68 – 35,35</b>	Bad	1
<b>35,36 – 50,01</b>	Below Average	2
<b>50,02 – 66,68</b>	Above Average	3
<b>66,69 – 83,35</b>	Good	4
<b>83,36 - 100</b>	Very Good	5

Table 1: Interval and category of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs MPI (Main Performance Indicator) index Performance Report of The Directorate of Public Diplomacy of MOFA 2022 [source]

According to the chart above, a scale of 4.06 falls under the "good" category. When compared to the scales of the past three years (2019-2021), the realizations were 3.78, 3.82, and 3.98, respectively, indicating a significant improvement. In conclusion, Indonesia's current image can be considered good and positive. Moving on to the assessment in the Southeast Asian region, according to the 2022 performance report, Indonesia achieved a reputation index of 4.11 in Southeast Asia. The highest index was obtained in the dimensions of tourism and socio-culture with a value of 4.43, while the lowest index was in the economy, governance, and law enforcement. After analyzing the background of the respondents, it was found that the highest average positive image index of Indonesia came from respondents who were more familiar with Indonesia and had visited the country. This indicates that individuals who have not visited



Indonesia or have not been exposed to information about Indonesia tend to give lower ratings for Indonesia's positive image.

The high index in the socio-cultural and tourism sector indicates that Indonesia is well-known for its natural beauty and cultural heritage. However, with such richness, various stigmas may arise, considering that the greater cultural wealth may lead to potential conflicts. An example of this can be seen in the case of the December 2, 2016 action related to political identity in Indonesia. Two million people participated in a protest demanding punishment for the Governor of Jakarta over a blasphemy case concerning a verse in the majority religion in Indonesia. The action received negative reactions both domestically and internationally. Many media outlets reported on the action, such as CNN, BBC, The Guardian, New Mandala, and others. Unfortunately, some media outlets framed Indonesia as a conservative country that is intolerant of minorities. This action, which caused numerous casualties, led to negative perceptions of Indonesia. Such conflicts have eroded the public's sense of security and peace, leading to a decline in trust in the government. Coupled with negative stigmas about Muslims, Indonesia, as a country with a majority Muslim population, faced additional pressure due to the 212 actions. These surfaced conflicts, which are easily accessible in the digital era, contributed to the decline of the MPI index for Indonesia's image in ASEAN, particularly in the sectors of governance, security, and law enforcement.

Therefore, the government strives to create an even more positive image of Indonesia by portraying the country not only as beautiful and rich but also as safe. While the high ratings in the tourism, social, and cultural sectors are commendable, it is essential to address the negative stigmas that arise, so that achievements in these areas are not overshadowed by isolated incidents. It is hoped that these national aspirations or interests can be manifested in various ongoing and future activities and programs, leading to an improved image of Indonesia on the world stage.

### ***Indonesian Image in ASEAN Through AYIC***

#### ***a. Image Projection of Indonesia Through AYIC***

Indonesia has a national interest in maintaining a positive image in the eyes of the international public. The ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp (AYIC) program plays a role in contributing to the strengthening of Indonesia's image in ASEAN by addressing issues of diversity tolerance, religious moderation, and efforts to live harmoniously free from sectarianism, ethnicity, religion, and inter-group conflicts. Despite Indonesia's rich social and cultural diversity, the level of sectarian conflict remains high, as evidenced by 3,640 cases of hate speech based on ethnicity, religion, and race in digital spaces since 2018. AYIC aims to represent a "good" image of Indonesia in ASEAN by showcasing Indonesia as a harmonious and tolerant nation. The program educates foreign participants through delegations from each ASEAN country to understand that Indonesia is a nation living with diverse diversity while maintaining tolerance and harmony.

AYIC utilizes the soft power theory to achieve this goal. Factors such as beauty, benignity, and brilliance are part of Indonesia's soft power in spreading its positive image worldwide. Beauty refers to the beauty and richness of religious life in Indonesia. Benignity demonstrates Indonesia's positive attitude in sharing experiences and solutions to overcome diversity challenges. Meanwhile, brilliance indicates Indonesia's achievements and successes in leading the AYIC program. These three factors serve as manifestations of Indonesia's strength-building factors and

concrete steps in building Indonesia's image on the global stage. With a harmonious, moderate, and tolerant image, it is hoped that foreign communities can understand that societal life in Indonesia is peaceful and that Indonesia holds a strong position in the world. Therefore, AYIC is essential in promoting Indonesia as a moderate, harmonious, and tolerant nation.

In conclusion, the aim is for Indonesia to be perceived as a harmonious, moderate, and tolerant nation so that foreign communities can understand that societal life in Indonesia is peaceful. There should be no fear of visiting or living in Indonesia, no doubt about Indonesia's role in mediating regional and international conflicts, and a full understanding that Indonesia supports world peace, as stated in the preamble of the 1945 Constitution. Such positive perceptions will contribute to Indonesia's strong global position. This encapsulates why AYIC needs to project and promote Indonesia as a moderate, harmonious, and tolerant nation.

*b. AYIC's Contribution to Strengthening Indonesia's Image*

The ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp (AYIC) as an international program within the ASEAN framework is one of Indonesia's initiatives that includes Indonesia's leadership. As explained in the previous sub-chapter, Indonesia's initiation and leadership in an international program are ideal strategies to enhance Indonesia's positive image (Trisni, 2020). This indicates that AYIC can serve as a platform and tool for the Indonesian government to spread its diplomacy, aiming to influence the delegates to understand and comprehend the information conveyed.

Below, the researcher will attempt to examine the main performance indicator (IKU) index of points related to improving Indonesia's international image from before the existence of AYIC to after its establishment. Since AYIC was first held in 2017, an analysis of performance in the year before the establishment of AYIC is needed, specifically in 2016. Referring to the strategic plan of Indonesia's public diplomacy 2015-2019, concerning the strengthening of Indonesia's positive image through an increased role in the international arena, the implementation was focused on four activities with an average target achievement of 85% for the year 2016. Before AYIC existed, the Indonesian government successfully implemented activities that exceeded the main performance indicator (IKU) index target by 106.48% in 2016. AYIC, which was first held in 2017, contributed to the increase of the IKU index related to the strengthening of Indonesia's image in ASEAN to 117.65% in 2017 and 2018.

The Good Country Index also shows that Indonesia improved its position from 2016 to 2017, coinciding with the commencement of AYIC. According to the index, Indonesia was ranked 83rd out of 169 countries in 2016, and it climbed to the 77th position in 2017 (The Good Country Index, 2023). This program also succeeded in changing the public's perspective on Indonesia. Through interviews with AYIC delegates, Angeilyn Ponsica Antivo from the Philippines admitted that she previously had negative views about Indonesia, especially with its Muslim majority and associated stigmas. However, after participating in AYIC, she understood that Indonesia's everyday life is characterized by harmony and diversity. Another delegate, Alessandro Volta Gunady, stated that AYIC helped him better understand the challenges faced by religious minorities in Indonesia and fostered better interfaith understanding. The AYIC program proves that Indonesia's initiation and leadership in international programs can be an ideal strategy to enhance Indonesia's positive image globally. By showcasing Indonesia's religious diversity, harmony, and tolerance, AYIC has successfully overcome negative stigmas and increased

understanding and appreciation for the country. This program is expected to continue having a positive impact in creating a better perception of Indonesia in the eyes of the world.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research focuses on public diplomacy in the ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp (AYIC) aimed at developing Indonesia's image in ASEAN. The research findings indicate that AYIC successfully overcomes the limited knowledge of ASEAN communities about Indonesia by directly conveying information. AYIC represents Indonesia's initiation as evidence of its commitment to address interfaith issues within ASEAN.

The AYIC program involves youth as future leaders in participating in community education. The program's goal is to project Indonesia's image as a harmonious, moderate, and tolerant country. AYIC also contributes significantly to public diplomacy through panel discussions, seminars, and showcase visits to Indonesia's harmonious community life. AYIC considers the public as an essential part of public diplomacy, where participants can directly observe Indonesia's harmonious life and clarify previous negative stigmas. This program helps Indonesia maintain and enhance its positive image internationally, especially in the interfaith sector. In the end, this research found that AYIC succeeded in becoming part of Indonesia's public diplomacy tool that seeks to project an image of Indonesia that is harmonious, tolerant, mutually respectful, and moderate by applying information dissemination and showing directly Indonesia's strengths as a projection of the desired image to participants. The result obtained is an increase in the image index which is evidence of AYIC's success in becoming a tool of public diplomacy.

This research recommends that future studies further explore the impact of AYIC beyond the aspect of public diplomacy. This is because AYIC operates under the ASEAN Directorate of Social and Cultural Cooperation, where public diplomacy aspects may not be directly counted in related reports, leading to data relevance being perceived only generally in its contributions to Indonesia's active involvement and increased leadership, innovation, and national initiatives in the world's eyes. Future research can examine aspects of strengthening cooperation with ASEAN countries, foreign policy regarding AYIC recommendations, and other relevant factors. Additionally, future research can expand its scope to include responses from the three ministries regarding AYIC, exploring how their collaboration supports Indonesia's national interests.

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