

## **Establishing Harmony and Social Awareness in Religious Diversity**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article presents issues related to harmonization and social awareness in religious diversity in Indonesia. Maintaining religious harmony is the responsibility of the state and its people. Moreover, Indonesia is a country with people who have several religions and beliefs. Based on Pancasila, people try to maintain harmony with their social awareness in tolerance for practicing their respective religions. However, there are still ripples in this harmony. Several cases in the name of religion occurred. The state intervenes with regulations, religious leaders, community leaders, government and community members intervene to resolve them. Several research results found that religious harmony still leaves many problems. Models of religious relations that have not completely dissolved, prejudice still appears and remain within the framework of the dominance of the majority group. Respect for differences, tolerance, dialogue and communication, cooperation, and solidarity, overcoming prejudice and discrimination are ways to maintain harmony and social awareness in religious diversity.

**Keywords:** religious diversity, religious harmony, harmonization, social awareness.

### **1. Introduction**

Religious harmony in Indonesia is a special thing in a society with diverse beliefs and religions. Existing differences such as ethnicity, culture, religion, race, ethnicity or certain groups or groups are advantages for Indonesia. Building tolerance can be a solution to reduce losses arising from differences in groups, class, ethnicity, race, religion, culture. Tolerance makes social life easier to live without feeling anxious about differences, feelings of discomfort when discrimination occurs, and feelings of calmer because social life is friendlier. (Bangun P, G., & Ulfatun N, F. 2022). Through religious harmony, diversity becomes possible to manage. The state itself has made various rules as anchors in managing religious harmony. This can be seen in Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution as the big umbrella, as well as several more technical rules, for example; PNPS No.1/1965 which was later enacted into Law No.5/1969 concerning Blasphemy of Religion, PBM No.9 & 8/2006 concerning Management of Harmony, Construction of Houses of Worship and FKUB, as well as several other regulations. Now, they are currently discussing the KUB Bill (Religious Harmony) and the PUB Bill (Protection of Religions) to strengthen this religious harmony.

The state's high attention to religious harmony should make this harmony run smoothly. It's just that reality is often not as good as it seems expected. As shown by various recent studies, religious harmony in Indonesia in recent days has experienced some kind of shock and defects here and there. Wahid Foundation mentions that there is a serious intolerance challenge. There are 600

thousand citizens who have carried out radicalism in the name of religion and 11 million who have the potential or are ready to carry out radicalism (Wahid Foundation Research Report, 2016). Meanwhile, INFID pointed out that although youth are considered tolerant, they tend to be permissive towards incidents of violence experienced by people of different beliefs, more specifically towards religious groups that are considered heretical (INFID Research Report, 2016). If we pull it even further back, then some data reinforces the concern about the breakdown of religious harmony. Data compiled from FICA (Fellowship of Indonesian Christians in America), PGI (Association of Indonesian Churches), PIK (Kompas Information Centre), and PDAT (Tempo Data and Analysis Centre), as stated in the Makassar Religion Research and Development report, shows, post-reform until 2004, there have been at least 469 vandalisms and forced closures of places of worship (Report on Research and Development of Religion Makassar, 2011).

Meanwhile, data on interfaith conflicts compiled by the United Nations Support Facility for Indonesian Recovery (UNSFIR) is no less astonishing. From 1998 to 2003, there were at least 428 cases of religious conflict. The highest frequency of conflicts occurred in the first three years of reform, namely 1998-2000 with 297 cases. For 2008 acts of violence and intolerance based on the findings of the SETARA Institute were also quite high, namely around 265 cases (Hasani, 2008). Internal research at the Makassar Religious Research and Development Centre on the Religious Harmony Index shows some encouraging results. The research concludes that the last few years the Religious Harmony Index has been running quite well. But like other studies, this study also made a note; 'The harmony category is high in the sense of minimal conflict, but tends to be passive. A model of harmony that on the surface seems without ripples, but secretly contains various problems. One example is religious harmony in an area that has so far been considered the most harmonious, namely North Sulawesi. In the study of the Religious Harmony Index, the area generally only celebrates differences in formal events but does not seep into cultural practices in society. Of course, this is not the case in some communities in this area, but this is a common phenomenon in many places, for example several places in Kotamobagu and Bolaang Mangondou (Syamsurijal, 2012).

The latest Makassar Religious Research and Development study on the Perspective of Tolerance of Various Religious Groups shows the same symptoms, namely that religious harmony seems to be going quite well, it is just that it looks awkward. Some are even trapped in a situation called passive intolerance, which is condescension, even at some point blaming other religions, even though it is not expressed in the form of action (Syamsurijal, 2018).

Diana L Eck (2006) states that models of religious relations which have not been fully integrated, prejudices still appear and remain within the framework of the domination of the majority group, cannot be called harmonious (pluralist). For Diana L Eck, true religious harmony or what she calls pluralism is 'the energetic engagement with diversity', namely an attitude full of enthusiasm and active behaviour in encounters amidst diversity. This is not possible if there is no enthusiasm for dialogue. While dialogue will not materialize, without humility to see the possibility of truth in other religions.

But the story is not always sombre. While religious harmony still leaves a lot of problems, at least that is what was shown from previous studies, it turns out that in certain communities' harmony is still going well and sincerely. Recent research on the Perspective of Tolerance of Various Religious Groups, although in general it is seen that tolerance is awkward, it has found that there are several harmony practices that work very well and are sincere in several communities. These harmony practices do not appear in religious organizations, but become practices in grassroots

communities. Of course, this practice has not yet become a mainstream practice, but at least several community enclaves that have sincerely practiced harmony give hope for tolerance in the community. Indonesia (Syamsurijal, 2018).

There are several community organizations that regularly engage in mutual assistance agreements; however, what stood out the most was when the local wisdom in the community was contacted. In contrast to the universal teachings of each individual church, local relativism is more likely to be taught as a community practice among people. For example, the people of Tanah Toraja today can create a fulfilling life because they are coloured by local fanaticism called Tongkonan. Tongkonan has developed into a socio-cultural system that upholds the equality of religious beliefs among all relatives.

Several studies state that local wisdom is indeed an important element in strengthening religious harmony in Indonesia. Indonesia has the potential of the nation's local wisdom system and values with the genetics of moderation and harmony in religious life. This is not just a concept, but has been implemented thousands of years ago (Ruswana, E, 2022). One of those who mentioned this was the Makassar Religious Research and Development study around 2009-2013 in the 'Religious Harmony Index' in several places. Of the four variables carried out in this study, the local wisdom variable often plays the most prominent role in strengthening religious harmony. Almost the same tone appears in the latest survey conducted by BNPT. The survey entitled "Effectiveness of Local Wisdom in Counteracting Radicalism in the Millennial Era", states; 'Local wisdom is still believed by the community to be one of the elements most capable of counteracting radicalism (Berita Satu, 2018).

One thing that can prevent local wisdom from becoming an important factor in reducing tolerance levels is its willingness to reach out to the general public. Local wisdom can become an adhesive force because society together can accept the moral rules that exist in this local wisdom. The community concerned considers local wisdom to be a collective agreement that has been passed down from generation to generation and has produced benefits for them. Although it is undeniable that some of society is transparent and accepts foreigners, there are also those that become a puzzle for other foreigners (Geertz, Clifford., 1973). Of course, local wisdom that can strengthen this harmony is local wisdom that is still being practiced, or only one abstract value. Some communities, such as Tanah Toraja in South Sulawesi, have local supporters who according to their own admission have a significant role in promoting and advancing various practices in people's daily lives.

This sincere practice of religious harmony in various communities can be a mirror in managing religious harmony in Indonesia. The local wisdom that exists in each community can be used as an example for managing harmony in other places. Of course, different communities do not necessarily do repetition, because each region has its own socio-cultural context. The most important thing here is that people in different places can learn about ways certain communities can make their local wisdom function effectively in managing religious harmony. At this point it explains three important essences, namely the problem of harmony between religious communities, best practice of harmony between religious communities, and active tolerance; mutual diversity.

## **2. Problems of Harmony Between Religions**

Even though harmony between religious communities is a desired goal, in fact there are still some problems that can hinder the achievement of this harmony. The study of religious harmony is important, because religious sentiments often lead to tension conflicts. Not only in Indonesia, but also in other parts of the world, even though social, political, and economic factors are quite colouring, the role of religion cannot be denied in social conflict. This is closely related to the lack of tolerance for adherents of other religions (Tsaniyah, 2018).

Some of the problems that often arise between religious communities are as follows. The first is Ignorance and Stereotypes: A lack of in-depth knowledge and understanding of other religions can result in negative stereotypes. People often rely on prejudice and false beliefs about other people's religions, which causes tension and conflict. The second is Religious Extremism: Some extremist groups use religion as a tool to justify acts of violence and intolerance. They interpret religious teachings in extreme ways and trigger conflicts between religious communities.

The third is the Politicization of Religion: Religion is often used by political parties to achieve certain goals. The politicization of religion can divide society and trigger conflict between different groups. Fourth is Discrimination and Marginalization: Discriminatory practices against people of certain religions can hinder harmony. Inequality in fulfilling religious rights, access to education, employment, or public services can cause tensions between religious groups.

Fifth is Forced Conversion and Blasphemy: Attempts of forced conversion or blasphemy can trigger anger and strong reactions from religious people who feel threatened. Such incidents can damage interfaith relations and exacerbate harmony. Keenan is an Imbalance of Power: An imbalance of power between the majority and minority religious groups can lead to unfair treatment and inequality in various aspects of life. This can affect harmony and create tension between religious communities.

Seventh is Territorial Conflicts or Holy Land Disputes: Places sacred to various religions are often a source of conflict. Competition over control of territory or disputes over sacred lands can complicate harmony between religious communities. The eighth is Poor Communication: A lack of good communication between religious communities can exacerbate misunderstandings and increase conflict. When people do not want listening to or trying to understand another person's point of view, misunderstandings and tensions can grow.

To overcome this problem, it is important to promote interfaith dialogue, better education about other religions, fair law enforcement, and the development of an inclusive and equal environment for all religious people. The phenomenon at the research location found harmony between religious communities so that it could become an example elsewhere.

## **3. Best Practice of Religious Harmony**

Humans are creatures that have a spiritual nature. This spiritual nature leads humans to always yearn and seek God (Tsaniyah, N., 2018). Best practice is commonly used in education. Best Practice is considered as a method, technique, process, and teaching activity that achieves outstanding success. This method can also be considered to complete educational tasks efficiently, effectively and is done repeatedly while at the same time proven successful in changing students. Although Best Practice is commonly used in education, that does not mean it cannot be used in a

wider social and cultural context. Best practice is a very important term to set an example of how to integrate a multicultural or multi-religious society (Alwi et al., 2022).

In this latter sense, Best Practice is a kind of experience or a way of life for a group of people who are very successful in one respect. The methods, processes and activities make it possible to do it in different places, although of course they don't have to be repeated outright (Kristanto, 2018). The techniques, practices, and activities of interfaith community relations that are touted as "Best Practice for Religious Harmony" have been very successful in fostering excellent harmony. This Best Practice for Religious Harmony has no distinguishing characteristics, but at least in this study, which falls into this category: First, there are multi-religious communities living side by side in peace and love. Second, there is a culture of active tolerance, in which people of different religions not only live side by side peacefully but also communicate with each other and collaborate in various effort.

Third, having a dispute resolution system that originates from the local wisdom of the community concerned. Fourth, peaceful practices have a long life and benefit the environment. Fifth, fostering harmony in other areas can be motivated or inspired by the community's efforts to do so. Sixth, society those affected have systems in place to combat outside extremist movements that could threaten religious harmony there.

Human creativity, which always longs for God, is proof that there is a religion of search or the result of spiritual creativity and human reason to seek God. Something that is considered as the basic reality, the source of life, or God, and is used as the basis and source of norms in his life (Tsaniyah, N., 2018). Of course, the categories mentioned above are not a rigid benchmark. Field context is very decisive to see whether something can be a Best Practice or not. The categories mentioned above are only a guide to help photograph Best Practice in their respective locations. The results of the study by Yunaldi et al (2021), there are three important aspects that cause inter-religious harmony in Panjehang Village. First, local wisdom in the form of the Huma Betang philosophy and customs that are inherent and become a guideline in community social interactions. Second, the family ties are so thick. Third, the role of community leaders in bridging community communication so that harmonious social interaction is built. The dimensions of culture and local wisdom play a very important role in the occurrence of harmonious communication and social interaction between religious communities.

#### **4. Active Tolerance; Greeting Diversity**

How in fact is the form of religious tolerance so far built? If referring to the history of religious tolerance, according to Walzer (1997), then tolerance start from the millet system. This policy was implemented in the caliphate system of Muhammad al-Fatih (Ottoman Empire) after conquering and making Constantinople as his capital. The simple millet system, according to Walzer (1997), is the recognition of different religions as a group where individuals are only recognized because of their association with that group. The millet system, thus, makes it possible to tolerate the actions or authority of other religious groups (in this case Christians), but not on the actions and choices of individuals, as persons in that religion.

Religious tolerance with the millet model still overshadows even though the state has taken the form of a nation state, and is no longer like the model of a kingdom ala the Ottoman dynasty or the Majapahit kingdom. Such is the case with the tolerance model in Indonesia. Even though this country has taken the form of a nation state, its tolerance building still uses the millet system. It

should be remembered that in the past kingdoms, from Majapahit to the Demak sultanate, the model of tolerance also used the millet system. Thus, as far as the tolerance that one wants to achieve, as long as it is still in the millet system, then in fact it does not move far from the tolerance system of the old kingdom. There will be no tolerance for individuals who want to live religion beyond certain religious associations, by for example integrating various religious teachings (post religion). Instead, what appears is, (by slightly changing Walzer's expression); "... intolerance for person extends beyond religion association" (Walzer, 1997). So, people like Lia Eden, Gafatar or individuals who embrace various religions within themselves do not yet exist in our tolerance formula.

Judgment of right and wrong, good, or bad, is usually based on the teaching of absolute truth. On the other hand, all religious people have the same goal, which is to be able to return to the Absolute (Tsaniyah, N. 2018). Has tolerance not been fully realized? Of course, this is so, if we refer to what is called true tolerance in a nation state not only recognition of the existence of religious groups, but also recognition of individuals within that religion. But is it true that tolerance which respects individuals as members of religious groups has never existed in practice in Indonesia? Based on several surface findings from previous R&D research, several community groups have seriously practiced tolerance. But as far as is observed, it is still within the limits of tolerating different religions as a group, not yet as an appreciation for individual actions and choices.

Witnessing examples of religious harmony that goes beyond their tolerance is important for best practices in religious harmony. In other words, the extent to which tolerance is applied in the community concerned with respect to individual freedom to practice their respective religions is one of the requirements for certain communities to be classified as Best Practices for Religious Harmony. It is possible to gauge whether a community's tolerance of that category is active or not by how it treats people who adhere to a religion different from what they used to do, how it views splinter groups, and how it treats organizations that are viewed negatively by the majority. public. In addition to what has been said before, Walzer (1997) also discusses active tolerance. especially in the third of the four previous categories called tolerance, namely: Initially, recognizing and believing that others have the right to do so. Along with pushing others to understand you better, it also undermines your ability to say what you want to say. Push, price, and variety form a triad. Maybe because of that diversity is sunnatullah and that diversity hinders further human development.

Meanwhile, when referring to Diana L. Eck (2006), true tolerance is not sufficient to build a truly harmonious and harmonious religious life. According to Bangun P and Ulfatun N (2022) active tolerance is the role of individuals willing to mingle with other religions in helping their work. Tolerance is just generosity to accept different. In such a situation, gradually it is felt that there is a more dominant group. The others were accepted only because of the generosity of the dominant group. This viewpoint is easy to fall into intolerance; "Other groups can be accepted, but with conditions like this and that... or we only accept other groups with a note that they can only do that and can't do this...!" (Bangun P and Ulfatun N, 2022).

Diana L. Eck (2006) then put forward another idea which he called pluralism. Pluralism: What is it? According to Diana L. Eck (2006), pluralism is more than tolerance and involves involvement active with diversity. Diana L. Eck (2006) then proposes three ideas regarding this plurality; Pluralism is the first and foremost active participation during diversity and differences. That is, the mindset that accepts the existence of other religions and considers them not important at all should not exist. Second, pluralism is an attempt to understand various religions or other groups

positively. Prejudice or suspicion in this case needs to be removed. Third, pluralism seeks to identify shared commitments among different commitments (Diana L. Eck, 2006)).

## **5. Conclusion**

Things that are very important in maintaining harmony and social awareness include; Respect religious diversity and understand that every individual has the right and freedom to practice their own religion. Respecting these differences in religious beliefs is the first step in establishing harmony. In addition, interreligious dialogue is an effective way to build understanding and tolerance. Through open discussion, people can share beliefs, learn from each other, and see similarities between different religions. This kind of dialogue also helps to prevent the formation of wrong stereotypes and prejudices against other religions.

Respect for human rights is also important in maintaining harmony and social awareness in the diversity of religions. Every individual has the right to freedom of religion and belief, as well as the right not to be persecuted or discriminated against based on their religion. Cooperation in social effort: Different religions often share common values of promoting humanity, social justice, and peace. By working together in social effort such as helping the poor, eradicating hunger, or providing education, people of different religions can overcome their differences and achieve a common goal of the common good.

Increasing understanding of other religions through education and knowledge can help overcome the fear, disbelief, or ignorance that may lead to conflict. Teaching about different religions in an objective and inclusive way will help build better social awareness of religious diversity. Then inclusive leadership is very important in encouraging harmony and social awareness in religious diversity. Religious and community leaders must practice the values of tolerance, promote dialogue, and intensify collaborative efforts to create an inclusive and harmonious society.

Through respect, dialogue, cooperation, education, and inclusive leadership, people can establish harmony and strong social awareness of religious diversity. This will promote harmony, mutual understanding and build a more just and peaceful world for all people.

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