



Tolerance and Respecting Diversity

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Abstract

Tolerance is an attitude of mutual respect for one another, especially in responding to differences. The differences include ethnicity, race, culture, religion, and physical condition. The purpose of implementing this project is to educate and, at the same time, serve the community, as well as to help increase knowledge about the basic attitudes that we must possess, namely by respecting each other, honouring one another, and being willing to live side by side with every different culture in Indonesian society to achieve harmonious harmony between one another and bring benefits to all parties. The data collection methods used are observation and literature study. The benefits of this socialization activity include fostering a sense of nationalism, instilling a sense of brotherhood, and reducing selfish attitudes to facilitate the achievement of consensus through deliberation.

Keywords: tolerance; respect; difference

1. Introduction

The Indonesian nation is a pluralistic society marked by political, social, and cultural differences, ethnic groups, customs, and religions. One undeniable fact in social life is the religious diversity embraced by the people. Embracing a religion means believing in a particular faith. Every individual is free to adopt a religion and practice worship according to their religion and beliefs.

We are not allowed to impose a religion on someone. A person chooses to embrace a religion based on personal freedom granted by Allah SWT since birth, which is also guaranteed by the state based on Pancasila and further detailed in the Constitution of 1945 Article 29 paragraph (2), which states:

“The state guarantees each citizen the freedom to embrace their respective religion and to worship according to their religion and belief.” (UUD 1945). This statement implies that religious diversity in Indonesia is acknowledged, and freedom to practice religious teachings according to each individual’s beliefs is granted.

Such freedom must be exercised in a way that does not disturb or harm those of other religions, because if it does, it could lead to consequences that may shake the unity and integrity of the nation. One of the factors that significantly contributes to shaping the life atmosphere of humanity is religion. From a sociological perspective, religion has a dual role and function—both constructive and destructive. Constructively, religious bonds often surpass blood relations and genealogical ties. Therefore, religion can make a community united, harmonious, and peaceful.

Conversely, destructively, religion can also possess the power to shatter unity and even break blood-based kinship ties. Hence, a conflict rooted in faith is often complex to predict regarding its resolution. This ultimately depends on whether individuals live in harmony and peace or engage in conflict and dispute. To religion and belief, tolerance means respecting, allowing, and accepting the existence of differing religious beliefs, even if they differ from one’s own. Tolerance does not mean that someone must abandon their faith or religious

teachings are due to differences with others; instead, it means allowing those differences to exist.

Tolerance paves the way for realizing religious freedom when one person applies it to another, and so on. When someone wants to exercise their right to freedom, they must ask themselves, “Have I fulfilled my obligation to respect others?” Thus, everyone will exercise their freedom responsibly.

Islam acknowledges and recognizes the reality of religious pluralism as a natural condition created by Allah in every human being—that every person inherently has different tendencies, including determining and choosing the religion they adhere to. The Almighty Allah did not create or force humans to be uniform and united in one religion, but instead gave them the freedom to make different choices, as stated in the Qur’an, Surah Hud (11): 118:

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۗ وَذَلَّ ۗ يَرَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ ۝ ١١٨

Translation: “If your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community, but they will not cease to differ.”

In our country, although the majority of the population is Muslim, tolerance remains a central agenda. The government has launched the “Three Pillars of Religious Harmony,” which are internal harmony among religious adherents, harmony between religious communities, and harmony between religious communities and the government. Every citizen is free to embrace the religion of their choice as long as interreligious harmony is maintained. Our society is quite diverse, both in terms of religion and ethnicity. This community lives side by side with followers of other faiths. In some urban areas, the population is dominated by indigenous ethnic groups who are predominantly Christian, while Muslims are the minority. Based on the above background, this research will be presented in this paper titled “Tolerance and Respecting Diversity.”

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative research method with a literature study approach. According to M. Nazir, a literature study is conducted using a data collection technique. The

authors review books, literature, notes, and reports on the addressed problem. (Arikunto & Suharsimi, 2013).

3. Result and Discussion

A. Religious Tolerance

1. Definition of Religious Tolerance

Etymologically, the word “tolerance” originates from the English word toleration, translated into Indonesian as tolerance and in Arabic as *altazimuth*, which means attitudes of empathy, mutual understanding (*tepo senior* in Javanese), and permissiveness. Terminologically, tolerance allows others to do something according to their interests.

According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language), tolerance is defined as the attitude or trait of tolerating (respecting, allowing, permitting) the beliefs (opinions, perspectives, faiths, habits, behaviours) of others, even if they are contrary to one’s own beliefs.

According to Mukti Ali: “Tolerance comes from the Latin word *tolerance*, which means to restrain oneself, be patient, allow others to have different opinions, have a generous heart, and show empathy (*tepo senior* in Javanese) toward those with differing views, beliefs, and religions.” (Mukti, 2006).

According to Baidh: “Tolerance is the internal readiness and ability to coexist with others who are fundamentally different, even in the presence of conflicts with your understanding of what is good and the proper way of life.” (Zakiyudin, 2005).

In daily conversation, the word “tolerance” and the term “*tourer*” are also used. This word originates from Dutch and means to allow or permit, with the implication of allowing something that ideally should not happen. Hence, tolerance involves concession. Concession is granted solely out of kindness and generosity, not rights-based. It is clear that tolerance arises and is practised due to fundamental differences, and it involves respecting the principles of others without sacrificing one’s own.

Muhammad Ali explains that tolerance is a religious attitude between two extreme poles: exclusivism and pluralism. The exclusivist position closes itself off from (all or part of)

the truth in others. A tolerant attitude allows others to differ, but often passively, without the will to understand or actively cooperate.

Tolerance is very close to the next stage, pluralism: an attitude of believing in one's truth while trying to understand, respect, and accept the possibility of truth in others, and further, being ready to cooperate actively amid these differences. (Husin, 2003).

The term *ummah* (community), according to Muhammad Quraish Shihab, is very popular, especially among Muslims, yet its meaning is often misunderstood or misinterpreted. This term is derived from a root that means "support," "something aimed at," or "determination." The Qur'an uses this term to describe a collective bound by specific ties. Humans form an *ummah* when such binding ties are established among them. As one community, humans must be united under a common direction, moving forward under leadership or exemplary guidance. This collective can be based on humanity, nationality, ethnicity, religion, etc. (Shihab, 2013).

Religion cannot exist without its followers. A religious community comprises several religious functions. Some lead rituals, others prepare the space and tools for rituals, while others participate. Some serve as conveyors of spiritual teachings—preachers, missionaries, etc. People of faith—including Muslims, Catholics, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Confucians—live and thrive in a nation based on Pancasila (Sudjangi, 1996). To uphold noble moral ideals in the religious life of Indonesians, the government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, promotes harmonious interreligious living through a trilogy of religious harmony:

- 1) Internal harmony within each religion, i.e., harmony among various sects, understandings, or schools of thought within a single religious community.
- 2) Interreligious harmony, i.e., harmony among followers of different religions, such as Muslims with Christians, Catholics, Hindus, and Buddhists.
- 3) Harmony between religious communities and the government involves fostering mutual understanding and respect between spiritual leaders and government officials to build a spiritually united Indonesian society. Based on the explanation above, religious tolerance is an attitude or trait that allows individuals to express their beliefs

and practice their religion while respecting others freely. Others' right to have different opinions and work together to build a peaceful and prosperous society (Depag RI, 1997).

2. Principles of Tolerance in Islam

As previously defined, tolerance is an attitude of mutual respect and open-heartedness, allowing others to do what they wish. (Burhan, 2017). According to Islam, religious tolerance is limited to allowing followers of other religions to practice their worship and spiritual teachings, as long as such activities do not disturb public order and peace. Tolerance in this context does not apply to Islamic creed (Aqidah Islamiyah), because the tenets of faith have been clearly outlined in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Fuad adds that what is prohibited in terms of tolerance is the kind of tolerance that involves supporting the beliefs of followers of other religions at the expense of Islamic faith (aqidah) (Fachruddin, 2006).

Tolerance at the level of reality is very complex, especially religious tolerance, in which many factors influence the dynamics of interfaith tolerance. According to Mu'ti (2016), several factors influencing religious tolerance come from non-religious external aspects, such as the politicization of religion for power interests. Religious violence often occurs during processes of democratic transition, governmental autonomy, and the accommodation of political identities. Another factor influencing tolerance is economic, as seen in the Ambon and West Kalimantan conflicts between the Dayak and Madura ethnic groups. Globalization is also a potential trigger of religious intolerance, as globalization erodes traditional values, including spiritual values, which in turn triggers radical actions as a form of resistance to preserve traditions. (Rahmandani & Samsuri, 2019).

From an Islamic theological perspective, Islam is filled with messages of moral tolerance and interfaith harmony. Islam does not distinguish between followers of heavenly (samawi) and non-heavenly (non-samawi) religions; all are treated equally as human beings tied together by the bond of universal brotherhood as creatures of Allah. In coexisting with others, the morality of tolerance is manifested by allowing followers of other religions to carry out their worship and religious teachings without any

interference, as long as it does not disrupt public order or interest. Therefore, the principles of Islamic tolerance must not damage or taint the purity of Islamic creed and Sharia (Jamrah, 2015; Bakar, 2015; Mursyid, 2016).

As for matters of faith (aqidah), a Muslim should firmly believe that Islam is the only true religion, and that the faith he or she embraces aligns with the word of Allah SWT as stated in the Qur'an, in Surah Ali-Imran verses 19 and 85, as follows:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ ۗ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا فِي مَنَاجِمَ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعَثًا ۗ يُبَيِّنُهُ ۗ وَمَنْ يُكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

"Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. Moreover, those given the Scripture did not differ except after knowledge had come to them, out of jealousy and animosity among themselves. And whoever disbelieves in the signs of Allah—then indeed, Allah is swift in taking account." (QS. Ali Imran: 19)

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ ۗ وَهُوَ فِي الْخِزْيَانَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

"And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam—it will never be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers." (QS. Ali Imran: 85)

If Islam teaches and emphasizes the necessity of moral tolerance in interreligious interactions, then Islam cannot destroy that tolerance in the name of religion itself. However, on the other hand, in interfaith relations, Islam is also very strict in preserving the purity of Islamic creed (aqidah) and Islamic law (Sharia) from external influences or impurities. Therefore, for Islam, the purity of aqidah and Sharia must not be compromised or tainted in the name of tolerance (Quraish, 2013). For this reason, Islam has its principles and guidelines that Muslims must firmly uphold in practicing tolerance.

1. Islamic tolerance is limited and focused on social and communal relationships built on the foundation of compassion and human brotherhood, as long as it does not contradict or violate Islamic theological principles.
2. Islamic tolerance in the religious domain only allows and creates a conducive environment for followers of other religions to worship and practice their religious

teachings. It is not part of Islamic ethics to hinder others from worshipping according to their beliefs and rituals, let alone to coerce others to convert to Islam.

3. To practice tolerance, the purity of aqidah and Sharia must be preserved. Islam strictly prohibits excessive or misguided tolerance—namely, compromising attitudes that lead to syncretism. This is the core principle of tolerance in Islam. As a religion that theologically promotes tolerance, Islam will never obstruct true tolerance in the name of religion. However, as a religion that diligently protects the purity of Tawhid (monotheistic creed) and Sharia, Islam strongly forbids any form of tolerance that leads to syncretistic behavior.
4. Tolerance must be practiced, but the purity of the Islamic monotheistic creed and Islamic law must be safeguarded. To be tolerant and to respect the existence of another religion does not mean participating in or adopting any part of that religion's theology or rituals. Blending one religion with another is a compromising, syncretistic act, not genuine interreligious tolerance (Supriyanto & Wahyudi, 2017).

3. Benefits of Religious Tolerance in Society

Religious tolerance is a fundamental foundation in all aspects of life in a plural society, including a nation's progress, whether in terms of its human resources or development aimed at the common good. Harmony is a dream and hope for everyone to exercise their rights and responsibilities safely and joyfully, without fear or anxiety. (Samsudin, 2020).

1. According to Jirhanuddin, the benefits of religious tolerance include:
2. Increasing faith and piety within each religion's diversity. The existence of other religions encourages each follower to appreciate and deepen their religious teachings and strive to practice them more consistently. Thus, the faith and religiosity of each believer can improve. This can be viewed as positive competition that should be developed and instilled among all religious communities.
3. Creating strong national stability. Harmony among religious communities can avoid tensions arising from differing beliefs rooted in religious convictions. National order and security will be ensured, establishing strong and sustainable national stability.

4. Supporting and ensuring the success of development. The government continuously strives to promote development in all sectors. However, if religious communities constantly conflict and harbor mutual suspicion, such efforts will be hindered. Fostering interfaith tolerance so that a harmonious society can be realized is one essential effort to achieve prosperity and successful development in all fields.
5. Creating a peaceful atmosphere in society. A peaceful societal environment is created when people can live together harmoniously in a spirit of unity, without discrimination that hurts or oppresses others. Peace is a fundamental goal of communal life, and interreligious tolerance and cooperation are the keys to achieving it (Ritzer, 2011).
6. Preserving and strengthening the bonds of brotherhood and social ties among religious communities. Maintaining and strengthening human brotherhood, in religious terms as *Ukhuwah Insaniyyah*, is essential in a nation with diverse religious life. Through religious tolerance, *Ukhuwah Insaniyyah* will be deeply rooted, and disputes or conflicts can be resolved more effectively (Rumadi, 2014).

B. Respecting Differences and the Value of Multiculturalism

Multicultural values are important in building an inclusive, just, and harmonious society. They highlight the necessity of appreciating and understanding cultural differences and efforts to promote respectful relationships between different cultural groups. In this context, it is essential to explore the supporting factors, methods, and implementation strategies that can be used to establish a multicultural society.

The research findings show that the supporting factors include leadership that promotes inclusivity, education that fosters multiculturalism, open intergroup communication, inclusive public policies, community participation, and individual awareness of multicultural values. Implementation of this theme requires collaboration and cooperation among various stakeholders in society.

The positive impacts of these efforts include: respect for human rights, increased tolerance and intercultural understanding, enhanced cultural richness, economic growth, social inclusion, improved global cooperation, and a stronger national identity.

Through honest and critical reflection on this theme, individuals and society can strengthen their commitment to appreciating cultural differences, promoting inclusivity, and building a genuinely inclusive and harmonious multicultural society. These supporting factors work synergistically to create an environment that values diversity, promotes inclusivity, and builds a strong multicultural society. (Sardy, 1983). Respect for Human Rights: In a multicultural society that values differences, every individual has rights that are respected and protected regardless of their cultural, ethnic, or religious background (Nurhasim, 2001).

a) Impact: Creating a fair and inclusive environment for all members of society.

Increased Tolerance and Intercultural Understanding: By appreciating cultural differences, society becomes more tolerant and understands the perspectives, beliefs, and values of other cultural groups.

Impact: The formation of harmonious relationships and the reduction of conflicts between groups within society.

Enhanced Cultural Wealth and Creativity: In a multicultural society, diverse cultures interact, creating greater cultural richness.

Impact: Increased variety in art, music, dance, language, cuisine, and other cultural traditions. Societies also become more creative in generating innovations and problem-solving through cross-cultural collaboration.

Economic Growth and Increased Social Inclusion: In an inclusive, multicultural society, everyone has equal opportunities to participate in economic and social activities.

Impact: Creating more dynamic economic growth and broader social inclusion, reducing social and economic disparities.

Improved Global Cooperation: A multicultural society that values cultural differences also creates a strong foundation for better global cooperation.

Impact: Closer diplomatic relations between nations, more intensive international exchanges, and collective problem-solving on a global scale.

b) Formation of a Stronger National Identity: In a multicultural society that appreciates differences, national identity can grow stronger (Santoso & Murod, 2021).

Impact: Citizens develop a deeper awareness of their own cultural values and heritage and an appreciation for the contributions made by other cultural groups to enriching the national identity.

Appreciating differences and building a multicultural society positively impact individuals, communities, and society, fostering an inclusive, harmonious, and dynamic environment.

Thus, appreciating cultural diversity and building a multicultural society is essential in creating an inclusive, just, and harmonious environment. In such a society, individuals and cultural groups have opportunities to learn from each other, interact, and collaborate, resulting in deeper understanding, higher tolerance, and stronger cooperation.

With an approach involving education, intergroup dialogue, inclusive policies, cultural promotion, collaboration, and the protection of human rights, societies can build a strong foundation for advancing multicultural values. The positive impacts of these efforts include respect for human rights, increased tolerance and intercultural understanding, enhanced cultural richness, economic growth, social inclusion, better global cooperation, and a stronger national identity.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion summarises the research findings, which correlate with the research objectives in the introduction. Then, state the main points of the discussion. A conclusion generally concludes with a statement about how the research work contributes to the field of study (shows progress from the latest knowledge). A common mistake in this section is to repeat the results of an experiment, abstract, or be presented with a very long list. The concluding section must provide evident scientific truths. In addition, the conclusions can also offer suggestions for future experiments.



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