



Theconcept Of Multiculturalimse In Major Religions In Indonesia

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Abstract

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Indonesia is known as a plural and multicultural country in all aspects of culture, race, ethnicity, language and religion. So that Multiculturalism can provide an understanding of how to behave in the midst of diversity. Misunderstanding will result in potential conflict, especially that which often occurs between religious communities, so understanding the concept of multiculturalism in all religions is very important. (1) Islam, sees diversity as a necessity from God, because humans were created into tribes, nations, and many religions to get to know each other or learn from each other. (2) Christian, many Bible verses talk about multiculturalism related to compassion between fellow human beings, for example Psalm 133, Galatians 3:28, Matthew: 22:37-40. (3) Catholic, one history explains how in the Second Vatican Council, the Church opened itself to the potential for truth in other religions, so that inclusivity became the key to dialogue with other religions, (4) Hinduism is the same, many of their holy texts explain the importance of maintaining peace in the midst of diversity, for example Arthavaveda III. 8.5 and Artahavaveda III. 30.4. there is also the concept of Ahimsa, Vasudeva Kutumbhakam, Tri Kaya Parisudha, Tri Hita Karana, Satyam Siwam Sundaram, catur paramita. (5) Buddhism is the same as other religions, the greatest enemy is not other groups, but oneself is the greatest enemy in creating peace on earth, (6) Confucianism also teaches about wisdom in behaving towards other religions. The application of multicultural values from all religions certainly needs to be implemented to face challenges in the midst of a multicultural society, such as attitudes of intolerance, misinterpretation or using religion as a tool to destroy other groups by providing multicultural education in the world of education and based on religious figures in each religion.

INTRODUCTION

The ideal of building a multiculturalist state is the hope of all countries, including Indonesia. Multiculturalism adheres to the principle of egalitarianism, meaning that every citizen and state administrator must give high respect to all forms of difference, be it race, ethnicity, religion and belief, or culture (Lukun, 2020). The egalitarian principle as an asset in managing the state with its citizens is that if a country only prioritizes one ethnic majority, it will be a problem in building a nation state with a multiculturalism state model. Indonesia is a country that has extraordinary wealth in various aspects, both from natural resources and human potential. The wealth owned by this nation must be maintained as well as possible to protect the order that has been mandated by God Almighty.

One of Indonesia's riches is the social or multicultural diversity that stretches from Sabang in Aceh to Merauke in Papua. In a country whose population is more than 200 million, there are no less than 300 ethnicities with their respective cultures and more than 250 languages spoken, customs and religions are also heterogeneous (Wahid, 2016). Especially for Religion has three patterns of universal disclosure, namely theoretical disclosure in the form of belief or religion as a *belief system*, then religion as a system of offerings or often referred to as a *system of worship*, finally as a system of community relations which is often called a *system of social relations* (Maman KH & Dkk, 2006). So that caution is needed in social religious issues.

Managing the *system of social relations*, especially this diversity, is the shared responsibility of all Indonesians. However, given the diversity and vastness of Indonesia, various problems remain, such as inter-group conflicts, tensions between community organizations and minority groups, religious sentiments, and the issue of separatism. These conditions have an impact on the social order among tribes, ethnicities, and inter-religious community relations.

Major religions in Indonesia, such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and other traditional religions, have diverse views and teachings on multiculturalism. Some religions emphasize the importance of tolerance and mutual respect, while others teach how to deal with differences wisely. In these teachings, it appears that the concept of multiculturalism is translated through various principles, such as peace, togetherness and respect for others. However, in practice, the interpretation of religious teachings in a multicultural society still faces complex challenges and sometimes triggers tensions.

As a country with a multicultural society, Indonesia is inseparable from potential conflicts that can arise due to differences in identity, including religious differences. Tensions involving religious groups, interethnic conflicts, and religious sentiments that arise in various regions show the importance of applying the values of multiculturalism in religious life. Therefore, studying the concept of multiculturalism in religions in Indonesia is an important step to understand how religion can be a means of building tolerance and harmony in the midst of diversity.

In the context of religions, according to Rasjidi, the meaning of pluralism and in line with the meaning of multicultural society is as a sociological reality that in reality society is indeed plural. However, recognition of the reality of this plurality does not mean giving recognition to the theological truth of other people's religions (wahab, 2015). So the concept of multiculturalism does not reach the level of recognition of theological truth, but rather recognition of plurality and even provide a sense of security and comfort, of course not forgetting also interreligious dialogue, which according to Mukti Ali, precisely allows the right of everyone to practice beliefs and convey to others. Interfaith dialogue is a meeting of hearts and minds between adherents of various religions that aims to achieve truth and cooperation in problems faced together (Mubaraq, 2010).

So this study aims to further explore the views of religions on multiculturalism and how to overcome the challenges that arise in a diverse society. Through this study, it is hoped that ways can be found to strengthen tolerance and solidarity between religious communities, so as to create sustainable harmony in a multicultural Indonesian society.

METHOD

A literature review is a type of research conducted by analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing various relevant literature sources to answer a research question or explore a topic in depth. This research focuses on utilizing existing literature to provide a broader and deeper understanding. In this case, the research is directed at exploring religious views on multiculturalism as well as the solutions offered to face challenges in a pluralistic society. Unlike field research, literature review does not involve collecting primary data through experiments or surveys. Instead, researchers use written materials such as books, journals, scientific articles, research reports and other related documents as primary sources. This process allows researchers to study existing ideas, concepts and theories, so as to provide a strong theoretical foundation and support the development of new ideas in understanding the issue of multiculturalism from a religious perspective.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Multiculturalism in the Perspective of Major Religions

Multiculturalism is a concept that emphasizes the recognition and appreciation of cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity in a society. In the context of major religions such as Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, this concept is translated with various approaches that have differences but are still based on the values of tolerance, compassion, and respect for others. Each of these religions presents its own point of view regarding how to live in diversity, providing guidance to its adherents so that they can interact harmoniously in the midst of differences. This is increasingly relevant in the era of globalization, where culturally diverse communities and beliefs coexist in the same space, so the value of multiculturalism is key to creating an inclusive and harmonious society.

a. Islam

In Islam, multiculturalism is not only recognized, but considered part of God's design. Islam views diversity as something that has been planned and willed by God, as stated in the Qur'an surah al- hujurat which means "*O people! Indeed, We have created you from a man and a woman, then We made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious. Indeed, Allah is All-knowing, All-researching*". So it is very clear that *lita'arofu*, means knowing each other, learning from each other with the aim of understanding each other, and here God has confirmed that his creation is plural in all aspects.

This shows that differences are part of the divine plan and not an obstacle to coexistence. Islam encourages its followers to treat others well, not differentiating based on religious, racial, or ethnic backgrounds. The Prophet Muhammad exemplified a tolerant attitude towards different tribes and beliefs in his time. In addition, the principle of justice in Islam also teaches that all people are entitled to be treated fairly and equally, both in terms of muamalah (human relations) and in law. This concept reinforces Islam's call to live in harmony, encourages brotherhood among mankind, and is the basis for a just and peaceful social life.

Suprpto in his book cites the opinion of Jacques Waardenburg noting that since its birth Islam has encountered various beliefs, Christianity with its various streams, Jews, Mohammedans, Manicheans and Sabians, Haranaines, followers of Hinduism, Buddhism and others. The authentic historical evidence of this contact is the Medina Charter, in which Islam not only embraces fellow Muslims but also preserves the right of expression of other religions (Suprpto, 2016). This means that Islam has historically been trained to live in the midst of heterogeneous religions and cultures.

In the Islamic perspective, there is no compulsion to follow the religion brought by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, instead Islam gives freedom to choose, this is supported by the text of the holy book which reads "there is no compulsion in embracing Islam" (QS. Al-Baqarah: 256). The matter of choice, of course, has theological consequences according to religious teachings, but clearly and explicitly Islam does not force anyone to follow its teachings.

Abdullah in his book entitled "Religion in Comparative Science" says the attitude of a Muslim to other religions should be 3 (Ali, 2007);

1. A Muslim must appreciate and respect the beliefs held by other religions, even if those beliefs are different from Islam.
2. Do not impose the will of the teachings of Islam on non-Muslims, even though a Muslim believes that only Islam is considered the truth.
3. Must be neutral, not a priori in liking or hating other adherents.

In line with the above, the Islamic perspective on respecting pluralism and humanity highly upholds the value of justice, in Islam called *al-'adl* (justice). *Al-'adl* means balance, harmony, and harmony, so the essence of Islam is fair. Islam strongly encourages the matter of justice and harmony not only among groups but also with outside the group should not create hostility (Zuhdi, 2015). as in the Qur'an surah An-Nahl verse 90 Allah says

which means “*Verily Allah enjoins you to be just and do good, give to relatives and Allah forbids from evil deeds, evil and hostility. He teaches you so that you may learn*” (QS. An-Nahl: 90).

Plurality and multiculturalism in Mohamed Fathi Osman's book in his book quotes an Indonesian Islamic reformer who is still one of the references of Indonesian Muslim scientists, namely Nur Cholis Madjid where he says that this is a must, especially in pluralism and multiculturalism there is room for dialogue, and a sincere commitment to shared civic values (Osman, 1996). That is where the Islamic concept of *rahmatallil 'alamiin* is not *rahmatallil mukminin*, God does not only give grace to Muslims but to all nature. So there is no reason for us to be antagonistic to *the other*, blind fanaticism, exclusiveness, and minority discrimination.

In Islam alone, it is very pluralistic, for example, sects, Islamic organizations, even Islam in Arabia and Islam in Indonesia have different cultures, but still the same reference is the Qur'an and Hadith, in the spread of Islam, the Middle East method cannot be equated with Indonesia, so it is necessary to be wise in proselytizing Islam itself. So that the Qur'an must be understood according to the *locus of* the text to be applied. In other words, in interpreting the texts of the Holy Qur'an, it must be contextualized so that it can answer humanitarian problems (Syafrudin, 2017). In Islam alone, the cultural aspects are heterogeneous, let alone added to the outside of Islam, the more pluralistic human life itself.

This means that ritual piety must be balanced with social piety, Allah does not only demand prayer, fasting, zakat, and pilgrimage, but requires the social aspect, namely respecting fellow humans, sharing, and loving each other in social aspects. That is what is referred to in Fahrurrozi Dahlan's book as Actual Islam which seeks to bring the arguments of the holy book of the Qur'an into daily life, including social verses, there is an effort to empirize the real teachings of Islam, actual Islam prioritizes the practice or *action of* religion in empirical life. So that harmonious life in a multicultural society will be realized because it does not stop at the level of text alone (Dahlan, 2014).

b. Christianity

In Christianity, multiculturalism is highly valued, with love for fellow human beings as the core of the teachings. In the Bible, it says that “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatia 3:28), which affirms that in the love of Christ, all people are equal. In the Gospels, Jesus Christ demonstrated an inclusive and accepting attitude by interacting openly with people from various social, religious, and cultural backgrounds, including those considered 'different' by society at that time. In Christian Religious Education (PAK), the concept of multiculturalism is increasingly emphasized to encourage the creation of peace in the midst of diversity and instill inclusive values among the younger generation (Ermindyawati, 2019).

In the Christian teachings of the New Testament, Jesus did not only come to the people of Israel, but also to other people. Thus, it becomes clear that the Christian faith is not the monopoly of one group but of all human beings. Relationships with people are not as enemies but as friends to get to know each other.

In the matter of cultural diversity, Ali Musri Syam, quoted by Obet Nego in his article, explains culture from the perspective of Christian faith or Christian theology that we humans are also encouraged to do good to others (Neto, 2020). It is clear that cultural and religious diversity is not a limiting wall to create *mutual understanding*.

Yangin argues in his book that in the life of a multicultural society the right attitude is needed in relating to others in order to create a harmonious life (Yangin, 2010). In the Bible there are verses that contain commands to develop these attitudes, for example Psalm 133. The psalm emphasizes the importance of harmony which is described by oil and dew coming down from Hermon and equated with blessings. This can be used as the basis for the implementation of Multicultural Catholic religious education.

Then there is Matthew 22:37-40, where this passage talks about the law of love. First, love for God and second, love for others. According to Yangin, this verse is the basis of the Bible in building an attitude of loving others. There is also John 3:16, John 4:1-42 and Acts 10. According to Stephen, these verses are the biblical basis for an inclusive attitude. These verses make Christians inclusive rather than exclusive (Stefanus, 2009). It is clear that Christianity also preaches mercy which is the foundation for living in a multicultural society in Indonesia.

c. Catholicism

One of the important historical aspects in Catholic history is the acknowledgment of the existence of truth outside the Church during the Second Vatican Council in 1962-1965. In the council the church made several corrections to the previous theological view of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the church there is no salvation). Since the council, the attitude of the Catholic church began to change from exclusive to more inclusive, recognizing the potential for truth in other religions (Suprpto, 2016).

The Second Vatican Council became a milestone in the Catholic Church because it gave birth to an inclusive attitude and made way for Catholic theologians to dialogue with theologians from other religions, although not all followers agreed with the concept of openness. It is the Catholic Church that emphasizes the importance of interfaith dialogue as a means of building understanding and cooperation among different groups. The Catholic Church believes that all people are called to coexist in harmony and mutual respect, and emphasizes that differences should be a bridge to unity, not a divider. A pluralist attitude is a view that does not pretend to judge others, there is social and cultural space as a place for all religious people to meet.

In Catholic teaching, God has enabled humans not to exalt themselves at the expense of others, but to respect and serve each other in humble service

as taught by Christ for humans (Voster, 2012:2). There is a principle of equality before God, be it a person, a child, a master, a slave. And this is one of the good things to see more broadly that all human beings have been made equal in Christ (Mile, 2006).

Loving oneself and others in a healthy way will gain depth of meaning if humans reflect that loving themselves and others is a manifestation of loving God. On the contrary, strong self-centeredness will destroy human personality (Mulyanto, 2009). So that the task of the Church is to develop a sense of responsibility to bring renewal in human life, including the matter of multicultural society. Catholic religious education teaches about the doctrines of the Church's teachings and also ethical matters related to relations with fellow human beings or social life.

d. Hinduism

In Hinduism, the teachings of Dharma play an important role in shaping the social behavior of Hindus. Dharma is a moral and ethical obligation that must be obeyed by every individual, encouraging Hindus to behave fairly and responsibly (Sindu & Dkk, Volume 1: Nomor 6; Desember 2023). In Hinduism, the demand to develop a harmonious life with others can be traced in the Vedas and some interpretations, such as the verse "*I unite your thoughts and steps to realize harmony among you. I guide those who do wrong to the right path*" (Arthavaveda III. 8.5). So Hinduism also teaches about peace and textually and contextually it is very clearly mentioned directly.

Artahavaveda III. 30.4 "*O People! Unite and get along as the gods unite. I have bestowed the same upon you. Therefore create unity among yourselves*". These two verses very clearly explicitly explain how important it is to maintain peace between fellow human beings.

There are also several concepts in Hinduism related to peace, such as *Ahimsa*; not committing violence or torture, *Vasudeva Kutumbhakam*; all creations are brothers, *Tri Kaya Parisudha*; where humans are encouraged to think, say, and do good. *Tri Hita Karana*; harmony between God, fellow humans, and the environment. *Satyam Siwam Sundaram*; Truth, Virtue and harmony, there is also the concept of *catur paramita*.

We take one example of *catur paramita* which is the four foundations and guidelines for realizing noble ethics. The four foundations are *maitri* (friendly attitude), *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (sympathetic attitude), and *Upeksha* (tolerant attitude). These four foundations in Catur Paramita are the key to building a multicultural civilization (Hindu, 2022).

e. Buddhism

Buddhism highly values diversity and strives to maintain harmony while promoting tolerance and love of peace. This can be seen from various Buddhist teachings including the inscription of King Asoka. "*Let us not honor our own religion by criticizing other religions. On the contrary, other religions should be respected on certain grounds. By doing so we make our own religion flourish, while also benefiting other religions. If we do otherwise, we will harm our own religion in addition to harming other religions. Therefore, whoever*

respects his own religion and criticizes other religions, solely motivated by devotion to his own religion with the thought 'How can I glorify my own religion', will actually harm his own religion. Therefore, harmony is encouraged with the understanding that everyone should listen to and respect the teachings of others" (sardi & Dkk., Maret 2021).

Buddhism teaches how to deal with the phenomenon of multiculturalism that occurs in society by increasing tolerance, understanding differences, respecting, not forcing, loving peace, and trying to maintain harmony with anyone, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, culture, and others. This was explained by the Buddha in several of his sermons, namely the Kalama Sutta, Brahmajala Sutta, Upali Sutta, and Saraniya Dhamma. The Buddha taught unlimited love (metta) to all beings. It is not easy to get angry, jealous, spiteful, and hold grudges against others. Instead, he developed a compassionate mind and cultivated generous qualities to help beings to be free from suffering. Such compassion is manifested in six ways viz: actions, speech, thoughts and thoughts, giving others the opportunity to enjoy what is obtained lawfully, living a moral life, not doing something that hurts the feelings of others, and having the same view, which is liberating from suffering and leads him to act in accordance with that view, living in harmony, not fighting because of differences in views (sardi & Dkk., Maret 2021).

Even the pinnacle in Hinduism is how to fight oneself, because the toughest enemy is one's own lust. In this regard, Guru Buddha said;

"Although a man has defeated millions in battle, yet he who can subdue himself is indeed the ultimate conqueror, Indeed one who has subdued himself is better than one who has subdued others, For one who masters himself, who always lives in control" (liaw, 2005).

This illustrates the importance of self-reflection in order to become more wise, so that hostility and conflict can be overcome and lead to the peace of humans and all living things, because the Buddhist concept does not only apply to humans but all creatures in this world. Conflict can only be overcome or prevented with love among others, eliminate the ego in ourselves, the ego only brings prejudice, stereotypes against other groups.

f. Confucianism

In Confucianism, the concept of social harmony is highly emphasized. Confucian teachings focus on family values, respect for parents, and the application of tradition as a foundation. Parents, and the application of tradition as the main foundations of social life. This principle makes Confucianism highly relevant in a multicultural society, where living in harmony amidst differences is a priority. In Confucianism, the concept of "Yen" or humanity is the moral foundation for building good and empathetic relationships with others, including those from different backgrounds. Yen emphasizes that a person's virtue is reflected in their kindness and generosity towards others, which in turn creates a more harmonious society. In addition, the values of mutual respect and appreciation of differences taught by Confucianism encourage its adherents to be active in maintaining harmony

with other communities, strengthening tolerance, and avoiding conflict (Ames, 1998).

Thus, in Confucianism, the perfect human being is called Sying Yen, which means a wise person, a kind of person who is worthy of being used as an example or role model for mankind. The core of Confucian teachings which is also very important is about the position of humans and the order of nature, that humans are originally good, equal and brothers, because humans have a heavenly nature. Humans should occupy positions according to their expertise, for the sake of natural order (Ali, 2007).

Confucian beliefs place faith in God as the root and foundation for learning, introspection and building a household, social life, nation and state. So a Junzi is a concept in Confucianism that means a person who is worthy of example, someone who has the Wuchang trait which means the five virtues in Confucianism consisting of Love, truth, decency, wisdom, and trustworthiness. Junzi is also the core of Confucian ethical philosophy which emphasizes the moral development of human beings, a Junzi should not be without self-cultivation. If one wishes to cultivate oneself, one must not be disloyal to one's parents. If one wishes to serve one's parents, one cannot be ignorant of mankind, and if one knows mankind, one cannot be ignorant of God.

Multiculturalism in the context of religions shows that despite differences in doctrine and practice, the basic principle of respect for fellow human beings remains a common thread. Each religion has a unique approach to celebrating diversity, but at their core, all religions promote the values of tolerance, compassion and harmony among human beings. In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, the values of multiculturalism are more important than ever to promote a peaceful and harmonious society. By understanding and applying these values in everyday life, individuals and groups can play a role in building bridges across differences, creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and accepted.

Application and Teaching of the Concept of Multiculturalism in Religions

Every religion teaches multiculturalism through its teachings, scriptures, and the examples set by religious leaders. In the Indonesian context, multiculturalism is taught as a foundation to maintain peace and prevent conflict in a diverse society. Major religions in Indonesia teach their followers to apply universal values such as compassion, tolerance, justice and equality in the face of cultural and religious differences.

a. Islam

Multiculturalism is taught in Islam through educational institutions, recitations and sermons that emphasize the importance of unity and equality. Religious leaders teach their followers to treat others fairly and without discrimination, in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and hadith.

b. Christianity and Catholicism

In Christianity, Christian Religious Education (CRE) plays an important role in teaching the value of multiculturalism. CRE teaches the

importance of love for others regardless of their background. The church also holds interfaith dialogues to strengthen understanding and tolerance between religious communities.

c. Hinduism

In Indonesia, Hinduism teaches multiculturalism through social practices that often involve communities from different religious backgrounds. Religious rituals and celebrations become a means to celebrate diversity and foster mutual respect between people.

d. Buddhism

Buddhist teachings of compassion and wisdom are taught through meditation, lectures, and social activities that involve various groups of people. This reinforces the principle that every living being deserves respect and fair treatment.

e. Confucianism

In Confucianism, the values of social harmony and humanity (Ren) are conveyed through education and guidance from religious leaders. This teaching directs people to contribute to creating a harmonious and respectful society.

Every religion has practical guidelines that can be applied in daily life to promote good relations and tolerance in a multicultural society. By implementing the teachings of multiculturalism, religions in Indonesia play an important role in maintaining harmony and minimizing conflict in a diverse society.

Major Challenges for Religions in Facing a Multicultural Society

1. Interfaith Intolerance and Discrimination

One of the biggest challenges in multicultural societies is the emergence of intolerance and discrimination, which often occurs due to a lack of understanding and respect for the diversity of different cultures and beliefs. Intolerance can occur when individuals or groups feel that their beliefs are the most correct and are less open to other religious views and traditions. As a result, discrimination can arise in the form of unfair treatment from the majority group towards minorities in the workplace, educational institutions, and even in everyday social life. According to a report by the Center for the Study of Religion and Multiculturalism, these intolerant attitudes have increased along with polarization exacerbated by social media that often reinforces interfaith stereotypes (Pusat Studi Agama dan Multikulturalisme, Laporan Intoleransi dan Diskriminasi Agama di Indonesia, 2023).

This intolerance is often exacerbated by stereotypes and prejudices against different religious groups, which are reinforced by a lack of interfaith interaction or shared experiences. For example, when individuals or groups never directly interact with adherents of other religions, they tend to be more easily influenced by negative views that develop in society. In addition, intolerance can also be reinforced by a narrow understanding of religious teachings. Some parties may utilize certain verses without looking at the context, giving rise to interpretations that support exclusive and discriminatory attitudes.

The impact of intolerance and discrimination is very detrimental, both for individuals and for social harmony as a whole. In addition to causing social conflict, this attitude also hinders the creation of an environment of mutual support and respect. In the long run, intolerance can weaken national unity and worsen interfaith relations. Therefore, it is important for every religion to emphasize teachings that invite people to respect differences, and foster a sense of empathy and compassion for all people, regardless of religious or cultural backgrounds.

2. Misinterpretation and Misuse of Religious Teachings

Another significant challenge is the misinterpretation or misuse of religious teachings, which are often used as justification for rejecting diversity or creating an exclusive attitude. This misinterpretation can occur when religious teachings are understood incompletely, giving the impression that religion supports narrow and intolerant views. As revealed by Abdullah in "Religion and Multiculturalism: A Southeast Asian Perspective", the tendency to understand religion literally without looking at the context often leads to intolerant views (Abdullah, 2019). Abuse of religious teachings can also arise when religion is politicized by certain parties. In Indonesia, for example, there is a tendency for some groups to use religion as a tool to gain political support, which ultimately exacerbates polarization in society (Hasan, 2022). When religion is politicized, religious differences tend to be seen as a tool to gain power, rather than a wealth that needs to be respected. This creates divisions between people of different religions, and damages relationships that could be more peaceful and harmonious. Ultimately, this misinterpretation or misuse of religious teachings is a major challenge to building a society that truly values difference.

Many postulate anti-peace actions in the name of Jihad. In fact, jihad is not only war, more than that it can be understood from a humanitarian perspective and philosophical moral principles that can be used for human welfare and greater social goals. Jihad is a misinterpreted concept today, only leading to deviations in Islam. Jihad is actually a manifestation of the universal mission in Islam at both the individual and collective levels. At the individual level, jihad is manifested for example in the form of self-control against satanic temptations. At the collective level, jihad is manifested in the implementation of fundamental principles and values of justice, cooperation, non-offense, and war against violence or violations of human rights, social chaos, and terrorism (Haryanto, 2015).

Religion is essentially a glue for social cohesion, not disintegration. Ibn Khaldun, a Muslim scientist, also had thoughts about the importance of social cohesion (*ashobiyah*) to achieve what is called welfare and prosperity for all (Jurdi, 2012). Do not quote highly sacred verses in religion for the benefit of certain groups.

3. Lack of Interfaith Dialogue to Promote Understanding and Cooperation

Interfaith dialog is a key element in building better understanding among religious communities and creating harmony in a multicultural society. Unfortunately, one of the challenges faced is the lack of interfaith

dialogue in various walks of life. The lack of interfaith dialogue is often caused by various factors, ranging from skepticism towards other religions, fear of rejection, to the assumption that dialogue provides no practical benefits.

This lack of dialog results in mistrust and prejudice between different religious groups. Effective dialogue should not only focus on differences, but also on universal values such as compassion and justice taught by all religions. In the absence of regular and active dialog, interfaith conflicts are more likely to occur due to a lack of understanding and the persistence of negative views (Dewi, 2021.). Overcoming this challenge requires the involvement of religious and community leaders to initiate dialog that can reduce prejudice and strengthen social harmony. Without effective dialog, interfaith conflict is more likely to occur because there is no effort to bridge differences or foster mutual understanding. When dialog is not active, prejudices will be strengthened, and negative views towards other religions are more likely to develop.

Therefore, this challenge needs to be addressed by more actively organizing dialogue activities, involving various community groups as well as influential religious leaders, in order to build bridges between different groups and promote peace in multicultural societies.

Strategies for Overcoming Conflict and Strengthening Harmony in a Multicultural Society

1. Multiculturalism Education in Religious Education

Religious education that emphasizes multiculturalism values is key in building a society that respects diversity from an early age. This education can teach that differences are an inseparable part of social reality, and how people should respond to them with a tolerant and inclusive attitude. For example, religious institutions and schools can include the concept of multiculturalism in the religious curriculum, teaching students to understand that their religious teachings promote love, respect and equality. As stated by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, "*The concept of rahmatan lil 'alamin in Islam teaches that Islam is a mercy for all nature, which means it includes all human beings, regardless of religion or ethnicity*" (Departemen Agama RI, 2022). In Christian and Catholic teachings, the concept of universal love is also reflected in the teachings of Jesus who emphasized indiscriminate brotherhood, so that people are invited to see others as part of one big family (Yayasan Pendidikan Kristen, 2021).

Multiculturalism education is a *politics of recognition* or *the need of recognition* by minorities so that they are not afraid to live in the midst of the majority, even providing awareness and affirmation to not only respect each other, but give and facilitate other groups to actualize their beliefs safely and peacefully (Wahid, 2016).

2. The Role of Religious Leaders as Conflict Mediators

Religious leaders have a great influence in society, especially in guiding people to address differences peacefully. In conflict situations, religious leaders who have authority and are respected by their followers can act as neutral mediators, helping to reconcile the disputing parties. For example,

the Buddhist teaching of ahimsa teaches not to harm living beings and to keep the peace, while in Hinduism, the concept of “*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*” (the world is one family) encourages people to see all human beings as part of one whole. As such, religious leaders can remind people of the importance of focusing on universal values such as unity and peace, which can ease tensions in a multicultural society.

Religious figures also have two major legitimacies: charismatic legitimacy and religious language legitimacy. The language of religion is very attached to religious figures, especially kyai, Tuan Guru, Pendeta, pedande, and others, so that it can become social capital in directing the orientation, attitudes and religious behavior of others. Charismatic legitimacy is also very important because without charisma religious figures will not gain great power and influence in society (Sukardiman, Vol. VI, No. 2 Juli-Desember 2021).

3. Peace and Tolerance Campaign through Social Media

McLuhan said that the world will become one global village (*Global Village*) where the products will be the taste of everyone. This concept explains that there are no longer boundaries of time and place. Information can move quickly from one region to another in a short time. This concept certainly talks about how the speed of information is analogized as a very large village (McLuhan, 1992).

Social media as a Global village in McLuhan's concept is a very effective platform to spread messages of peace among the younger generation. Religious institutions can work together to create content that supports messages of multiculturalism and religious pluralism, such as inspiring stories of tolerance or interfaith collaboration in social activities. These campaigns can take the form of quotes from scriptures that teach compassion or short videos depicting interfaith collaboration in peaceful activities. Social media provides ample opportunities for people to access positive information that promotes peace and diversity, thus playing an important role in countering intolerance in the digital age. By using social media, messages of peace and tolerance can reach a wider audience, especially among young people, creating an open mindset towards diversity.

By implementing these strategies, Indonesia's major religions can play an active role in preventing, dealing with conflict and strengthening harmony. Education that instills multicultural values, the role of religious leaders as mediators, and campaigns through social media will strengthen the foundations of a harmonious society that respects diversity and upholds the values of peace.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, multiculturalism in the context of major religions in Indonesia (Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism) is a very important principle to create harmony in the midst of community diversity. Every religion teaches universal values such as compassion, justice, and respect for differences, which are the basis for peaceful coexistence. The concept of multiculturalism in these religious teachings helps strengthen the sense of brotherhood and build bridges between people of different faiths.

However, the application of multiculturalism in daily life in Indonesia faces various challenges. Challenges such as intolerance, discrimination and misinterpretation of religious teachings can worsen social harmony. In addition, the lack of interfaith dialog also has the potential to create distrust and prejudice between religious groups. To overcome these challenges, several strategies can be implemented. Multiculturalism education in religious studies needs to be improved so that the younger generation understands the importance of respecting differences. Religious leaders can also act as mediators in resolving interfaith conflicts, while social media can be used as a means to spread messages of peace and tolerance. Through this approach, religions in Indonesia can help maintain harmony and build a more inclusive, harmonious and peaceful society in the midst of diversity.

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