The Challenges of Religious Harmony and Tolerance in Developing Countries

Anggun Putri Indah Sari*
Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyze how the challenges of religious harmony and tolerance in Indonesia are in the social and legal aspects. This study uses a literature study approach by comparing several legal regulations and previous research related to secondary data. This study found that religious harmony is a state of inter-religious relations based on tolerance, mutual understanding, mutual respect, respect for equality in the practice of their religious teachings and cooperation in social, national and state life within the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia. The right to religion (to embrace and practice worship) guaranteed by the Constitution and other laws is not a right that can be exercised at will. This means that there are certain signs or conditions so that the exercise of that right does not interfere with the rights of other people, the security and order of the community, the State and the nation; in other words, there are restrictions that must be considered by residents. This limitation is in Article 28J paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution in conjunction with Article 73 of the Human Rights Law. Article 28J paragraph (2) stipulates that in exercising their rights and freedoms, everyone is obliged to comply with the restrictions determined by law with the sole purpose of guaranteeing recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and to fulfill fair demands in accordance with moral considerations, religious values, security, and public order in a democratic society.

KEYWORDS: Tolerance, Interfaith, Religious Harmony, Policy

*Corresponding author’s email: anggunputt@yahoo.com
Submitted: 28/10/2021 Reviewed: 11/12/2021 Revised: 24/03/2022 Accepted: 17/05/2022
I. INTRODUCTION

Tolerance between religious communities is a problem that often occurs in the country of Indonesia which is a country of various ethnicities and cultures and also has different beliefs for every resident who lives in the country. This problem has become a national disaster, because every year there are conflicts between religious communities in Indonesia. Not only causing material losses and sacrifices, but casualties also fall every year as a result of this conflict. So it is very natural that this inter-religious conflict has become a concern to foreign countries.¹

¹ Based on data on the condition of Freedom of Religion/Belief in Indonesia, the SETARA Institute identifies two main challenges in terms of tolerance, namely the rampant cases of blasphemy and disturbances to places of worship. These two issues are the two dominant categories of violations on freedom of religion/belief (KBB) in 2020 and 2021. In 2020, there were recorded at least 20 cases of criminalization using the blasphemy law and 24 places of worship that experienced disturbances. In 2021, even though in terms of the number of incidents there has been a decrease, based on the SETARA Institute’s mid-year data, blasphemy of religion and disruption of places of worship are still prominent cases this year. There are at least six cases of criminalization using religious blasphemy and six disturbances of places of worship. This number does not include old cases that have not been resolved, such as the cases of the church in Aceh Singkil or the HKBP Filadelfia church
Living side by side between religious communities is a normal thing to happen in Indonesia. It has become the daily food of the people a country that must live side by side with citizens of different beliefs. Currently, Muslim is the majority religion in the country of Indonesia, this is because Indonesia is the second largest Muslim religion after Iran. There is no difference between majority and minority citizens in Indonesia, this is carried out so that conflicts and divisions do not occur between Indonesian citizens, so that fellow religious people must respect each other even though they have different beliefs.

tolerance for immigrants has also increased from 2014 to 2017. Based on the results of a survey by the Ministry of Religion conducted in 2015, the level of religious harmony was at 75.36 in the range 0-100. The head of the Ministry of Religion's Research and Development and Training agency, Abdul Rahman Mas'ud said this figure places Indonesia in the category of high harmony.  

The high harmony meant in this study is clear, explained Rahman, there isah the workings of the dimensions of harmony, namely tolerance, equality, and cooperation significantly. However, the average national harmony leaves several records. The Ministry of Religion does not close its eyes that there are still a number of cases in a number of areas, for example conflicts over the construction of places of worship that are still occurring in several areas such as the cases in Aceh Singkil, Tolikara, Bekasi and other areas. 

An example of social deviation or a case regarding inter-religious tolerance in Indonesia is the destruction of a temple in Lumajang, East Java by an unknown person in February 2018. The perpetrator destroyed at least three statues that were in the temple, but the case

---


has been handled by the authorities. A number of parties strongly criticized the act of religious violence because it was seen as tarnishing diversity and injuring the face of democracy in Indonesia, which is characterized by high tolerance by its people. The Setara Institute considers this case of religious violence as a ‘slap’ to religious and government leaders who have just held a large deliberation for religious leaders for the harmony of the Indonesian Nation which was held in Central Jakarta from 8 February to 10 February 2018.

All of these incidents were very different from the conditions of the residents living in Candisari Village, Purwodadi District, Grobogan Regency. The conflict that occurred in Lumajang did not occur in Candisari Village even though it consisted of people who owned fallows different faith groups, namely community groups who are Muslim and community groups who are Catholic Christians and Protestant Christians. But instead they can live as one blend side by side with mutual tolerance to one another which then encourages the growth of good social interaction between the two groups of religious people.

Actually, many conflicts that have occurred in religious communities so far have been due to misunderstandings or lack of religious awareness, so that it causes a lot of inter-religious conflicts. Full awareness of every citizen about the importance of living in tolerance which is really needed by every citizen in living side by side with people who have different beliefs.

So that the role of community leaders in the environment around where we live really needs their presence and participation to intervene if there are problems or conflicts related to violations of tolerance between religious communities. And also the role of the police is also very important to regulate the course of the legal process
against any legal issues of religious tolerance. Because cases that affect religious tolerance must be legally processed because the regulations have been stated in the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and has been approved by the government.

However, there are many people who do not understand and do not understand these regulations because of a lack of knowledge and outreach from the government and parties with the obligation to socialize the importance of living with tolerance between religious communities in the country of Indonesia, which has a variety of different beliefs its citizens.

Other problems also come from several factors, for example there is a citizen who is very selfish and he feels indifferent to a citizen who has a different religion from his. Even though he himself already knows that living with inter-religious tolerance is very important for every Indonesian citizen and has been regulated in the law. But he still didn't care. He feels that his life is his own and does not care about his neighbors because these neighbors have different beliefs from his, this should not be allowed to go unpunished, because we also have to strengthen our friendship with our neighbors even though we have different beliefs. So that if we are in trouble we can ask our neighbors for help, and vice versa.

The role of a parent in educating his child about the importance of having a sense of tolerance towards fellow Indonesian citizens is also very much needed for his role in building a young generation of Indonesians who are aware of the importance of living with high tolerance. Because such lessons are very important to be taught from an early age so that children are not affected by positive influences from outside, such as being easily influenced by hoaxes, because they
are still children, it is very easy to be deceived by hoax news.⁴ So as a good parent who cares about the future of his child, he must also set a good example for his children. It is like having to respect friends who have different beliefs, and do not make fun of them from time to time. Because they are also the same as us, humans who have their own beliefs.⁵

And the role of Kyai as a religious leader is also important to spread good and positive tolerance and spread information about the importance of having a high sense of tolerance to live in today’s society. So we cannot remain silent and must move actively to spread positive things for the prosperity of our society and country.⁶


II. METHODS

The method used in the preparation of this study is a descriptive method, which provides an overview of certain phenomena or certain aspects of the life of the people studied. The author conducts research methods in two ways, namely first, the author observes from the surrounding environment, then takes the research data to serve as the object of preparing the paper. Second, the authors take references from various sources such as books or papers from the library or from the internet. Meanwhile Rosenberg, Morris gave two meanings of the descriptive method, namely, describing the symptoms studied and studying the relationship between the symptoms studied. The descriptive method is not only limited to collecting data, but analyzing the data as well, and also comparing similarities and differences in certain phenomena.

This method was chosen because it is a very effective method for writers. The author observes and retrieves data from the environment around the author's own residence. The location of this research was taken in Candisari Village, Purwodadi District, Grobogan Regency, Central Java Province. The choice of location for data collection in Candisari Village was chosen because the village has a diversity of religions, where the people adhere to both major religions, namely Islam and Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant Christians. The author lives in a settlement where the majority embraces the Muslim religion, and 4 other religions in Indonesia are minority religions in the neighborhood where the author lives. After the method is

determined, then the data collection technique is determined according to the method used in this study.

The high level of tolerance that exists in the community can be measured from the activities of the community itself. If they can accept and respect each other's differences in beliefs, it means that the community has a high level of tolerance among religious communities. However, if in that environment there is a family that is a minority in religion, then they have never joined RT or RW gatherings for reasons of high suspicion of people who have the majority religion and do not want to mingle with people who have the majority religion, then this is not permissible continue again. Even though we have different beliefs, we are still one Indonesia,

### III. RELIGIOUS HARMONY & TOLERANCE IN INDONESIA: A CURRENT DEVELOPMENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

Tolerance between religious communities is needed for the people of Candisari village to maintain harmony between communities. They can live in harmony because they are used to associating with neighbors who have different beliefs, such as at social gatherings and youth organizations and RT or RW associations. They also help each other when asked for help because they realize that as a member of a minority religion they must also be open so that life is easy by helping each other and regardless of differences in beliefs.\(^7\)

---

\(^7\) Indraswati, Dyah, and Deni Sutisna. "Implementasi Penanaman Nilai-Nilai Nasionalisme di SDN Karanganyar Gunung 02, Candisari, Semarang, Jawa Tengah." *Jurnal Rontal Keilmuan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan* 6, No. 2 (2020); Arifah, Desi Nur, and Badrus Zaman. "Relasi Pendidikan Islam dan Budaya
The high tolerance between Christians and Muslims in Candisari Village is also very visible when Muslims celebrate their great day, namely welcoming the Eid al-Fitr. So usually residents of Candisari Village who are Protestant Christians and Catholic Christians meet each other with other Muslim residents and say during the holidays. And vice versa, it is not uncommon for Village residents who believe in Catholic Christianity and Protestant Christianity to celebrate Christmas or Easter, residents of different beliefs also say it. If Christians do not have time to meet Muslims who are celebrating Eid al-Fitr, Christians usually deliberately take the time to come to the homes of Muslims to say sorry and forgive each other. This already shows how high the attitude of tolerance and mutual respect between religious communities in Candisari Village, which has a variety of residents with different beliefs.

Another thing that also does not escape the view that the people in Candisari Village have high tolerance is that Muslims usually hold traditions congratulation sto pray for their deceased ancestors or to send prayers for the safety of family members. In this slametan event, Muslims are usually distributed rice which is put in a place called besek and the residents usually call it nasi besek. Even though Christians do not participate in slametan activities in Muslim homes, the Muslims who hold the slametan do not forget that they also live side by side with Christians as well. So usually after the salvation ceremony, Muslims always set aside a portion of the nasi besek which they distribute to the congregation to give to the Christians who live next door to them.

In Candisari Village, all residents do not look at the different beliefs of each member, because when Christians celebrate an event, they are also not spared by the kindness of Muslims. They also usually provide besek rice for Muslims who live side by side in one village. Because they also have relatives of different beliefs, so living side by side and interacting with people of different beliefs is not a taboo for them, but has become a habit for them.⁸

Living side by side directly and with neighbors who have different beliefs from ours is indeed difficult and certainly not as easy as the eyes of other people who just judge it. We are the ones who live it and we can feel what it is like to live side by side directly with people of different beliefs, so if we become one of the citizens who believe in a minority and live in a society where the majority belief is different from ours. Of course we have to stay in harmony with our neighbors and we have to reduce bad prejudice in order to kinship ties and friendship ties with neighbors are maintained. Also communicate more with our neighbors even though we have different beliefs, this is not an obstacle for us to communicate with other people, and the most important thing is that we should not miss communication with our neighbors, so as to prevent suspicion from happening to

neighbors. us, so that we can maintain harmony with our surroundings.

Awareness from the people themselves that tolerance between religious communities in their environment is not a cheap way to grow it. The most important thing is that there must be awareness from the community itself. In addition, the socialization of religious leaders in their surroundings is also very important to foster a very high sense of inter-religious tolerance. The heads of each region must also be aware, if there are citizens who have different beliefs from theirs which are usually a minority religion, a chairman or leader must have a way, how can citizens who have diverse and different beliefs become one, namely one Indonesia. So that there is no split that occurs inside the environment in which we live, so we can live safely side by side with a high tolerance attitude.⁹

---

⁹ The basic philosophical attitude of tolerance means that all humans are born with the freedom to choose and be responsible for themselves. The challenge for a pluralistic country is found in conflict, domination and competition. The key to living in a pluralistic context is tolerance. Indeed tolerance, of course there are those who accept and there are people who do not accept. The tolerance model consists of three kinds of models, namely allowing, understanding, and dialogue. In terms of religion, tolerance is part of one's religious maturity. Philosophically and ethically, tolerance is basically enough to feel what we believe is right without hurting or blaming what people believe is right. The level of tolerance itself is divided into three, namely allowing, not disturbing what other people believe or what other people are doing. Then, understand each other’s differences in order to better understand emotionally why there are differences and understand each other in order to achieve tolerance, and the highest level is when we are able to dialogue with different points of view, express each other without hurting each other. Please see Newman, Jay. "Foundations of religious tolerance." Foundations of Religious Tolerance. (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2019); Habermas, Jürgen. "Religious tolerance—the pacemaker for cultural rights." Philosophy 79, No. 1 (2004): 5-18; Hook, Joshua N., et al. "Intellectual humility and religious
Regarding the case of suspicion of a belief that has the intention to harm a people with a different belief, this is something that is currently happening in Indonesia. We should not blame one party because there is actually no religious teaching that teaches harming other religions, so we should not blame the religion, because that religion is innocent. We should ask where did the perpetrator get such a teaching? [These actors are not proud of their own beliefs, but can even destroy their own religion, because after they do things that deviate from their religious teachings, they will become the subject of conversation everywhere, Even worse, the perpetrators actually become materials of insults and blasphemy in society and this causes disharmony between citizens in the community and can cause disharmony among fellow Indonesians and result in frustration which will have a negative impact on themselves and those who live around them. So tastesuspicion of someone who has a different belief from us must be eliminated, if someone from his group does something bad, it doesn't mean that all members of his group are also labeled bad, we blame the person not the religion, because there is no religion that teaches badness to its adherents.

However, Indonesia is a country that has an alarming level of tolerance. This has been reported by several surveys, for example, a
survey from *Lingkar Survei Indonesia* (LSI) and conducted by a surveyor named Ardian Sifa. He said that according to the results of his survey, around almost 50% of people in Indonesia feel uncomfortable when they have to live side by side with people who have different beliefs. In the survey conducted by the LSI, respondents considered that the president, politicians, officials and the police had not maximized their ability to protect differences in beliefs and security in society and also lacked optimal protection of human rights which are very important for every Indonesian people.

There are also many people who are wrong in conveying the teachings of their respective religions. Like committing violence in his religious teachings. Even though this was never taught in his religion. This is closely related to the problem of inter-religious tolerance. Because it causes a person’s mental breakdown due to violence experienced by adherents of that religion. Violence does not only arise from teachers or people closest to the victim, but this violence also arises from several community leaders in teaching their religion and from government officials as well due to the lack of optimal dissemination of opinions about the importance of living with high inter-religious tolerance.

However, according to the United Nations, the level of tolerance in Indonesia is indeed invalid, because it always changes every year. Currently, Indonesia ranks 117th out of 128 countries based on the high level of tolerance among religious communities. There are still many cases of attacks between families or beliefs or between groups that still occur frequently in Indonesian territory. This is because a group does not want to feel inferior to other groups. Therefore a group that does not want to lose to other groups takes action against other groups. Other things can also be seen because of irritability, this
is very dangerous. On the one hand, we should not offend if it will end tragically, as those who feel offended will commit acts of violence, so we should not offend a person or a particular group. And on the other hand, we don't even forget to be easily offended, don't easily eat other people's words raw, don't like to think negatively about other people's words. Because if we are easily offended, it will be harmful to ourselves and others around us.

So it is better that we have to live with high tolerance between religious communities, because conflicts regarding issues of tolerance often occur due to feeling offended by a person or a group, so we have to guard our words to anyone, do good to anyone, then kindness will always come to us. On the other hand, we must always think positively and not be easily offended by other people’s words, because it could be that behind someone's allusion, it contains a very beneficial meaning for our lives. So we shouldn't feel irritated with someone or hold grudges against someone or a group that has offended us and we have to think positively and accept it gracefully.

In the further context, when we become parents in the future, we must also teach tolerance to our children, because it is obligatory to impart knowledge about the importance of religious tolerance to our children and grandchildren. Who doesn't want to see our children and grandchildren get lots of friends? Who doesn't want to see our children and grandchildren happy because they have lots of friends who help in times of trouble? Surely we are all happy. It is impossible for us to feel unhappy when we see our children and grandchildren having fun and having fun hanging out with their friends. So that's where it is important for us to teach the importance of tolerance, respect, and also respect for others even though they have different beliefs. If they bring a positive impact on our lives, why don't we just
come closer? Another advantage that we will get from tolerance, respect and respect for others who have different beliefs is that we will have many friends, because when we are in trouble there will always be friends who are always ready to help us and fight with us.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the statement above, it can be concluded that the level of tolerance in Indonesia is not fully as high as the government had hoped, this happened because of many external and internal factors that emerged from every Indonesian society. The survey that has been carried out now shows that the level of tolerance in Indonesia is still quite low, this is because the surveys were conducted by only a few parties or institutions, and not for all Indonesian citizens. So it is difficult to say that Indonesia is a country with a high level of tolerance. However, the level of tolerance that occurs in Candisaari Village is also a fairly high level of tolerance. This is because when a Muslim citizen receives a reward or blessing, they do not forget to share and enjoy it with residents who are Catholic Christians or Protestant Christians. Vice versa, if the residents of Candisari village who are Protestant Christians or Catholic Christians when they are receiving abundant rewards from the lord, they also do not forget to share them with their neighbors who are Muslims or others. It can be concluded that residents in Candisari Village are people who live with a fairly high level of tolerance between religious communities. And from all the statements above we can take a lesson that every human being does have the right to choose their own beliefs and beliefs. So if there are people or we meet someone who has a different belief than us, we must appreciate and respect them too. So later if we
appreciate and respect someone who has a different belief than us, then we will be rewarded with them respecting and respecting us too.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
None.

COMPETING INTERESTS
The Authors declared that they have no competing interests.

REFERENCES


Syera Anggreini Buntara & Halili Hasan, “Tantangan dan Harapan dalam Pemajuan Toleransi di Indonesia”, *Press Release SETARA*


