

# Building a Tolerant Muslim Society Amidst the Indonesian Diversity

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## ABSTRACT

Indonesia is a country with a pluralistic social structure. Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism with most people embracing Islam is one of the indicators of a pluralistic country. If it is not managed well, this diversity can become a trigger for conflict. Pengalangan, a village in Gresik, East Java, has a plural-harmonious community structure. The religion plurality, Islam and Hinduism, is the dominant character, with Muslims as the majority. The construction of harmony between religious communities cannot be separated from a tolerant Muslim society.

The formation of a tolerant Muslim society begins with the process of internalizing inclusive Islamic values; ta'aruf, tasammuh, ta'awun. This process produces a stock of knowledge for Muslims which becomes a guide for the second and third processes. The second process is externalization; the adapting Muslim communities to differences. In this adaptation process, Muslims use their stock of knowledge as a guide for adaptation. The third process is objectivation; the process of interaction of Muslim communities with the ability to self-identify based on their stock of knowledge. Finally, with an ethnographic study, a model for the formation of a tolerant Muslim society as a prototype in Indonesia can be found.

**Keywords:** tolerant Muslim society, diversity

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with cultural, ethnic and religious diversity spread throughout its territory. Indonesia has more than 300 ethnic groups or ethnic groups, more precisely there are 1,340 ethnic groups in the country according to the 2010 BPS census. The Javanese are the largest group in Indonesia with a number reaching 41% of the total population.(Indonesia.go.id, 2017) Meanwhile, Kalimantan and Papua have small populations of only hundreds of people. The division of ethnic groups in Indonesia is not absolute and unclear, this is caused by population movements, cultural mixing, and mutual influence.(kemlu.go.id, 2018)The number of Indonesian citizens according to religion referring to Ministry of Religion data in 2022 shows that of the total number of Indonesian citizens there are 276.534.400 people, Muslims number 241.699.189 people, Christians number 20.647.769 people, Catholics number 8.501.292 people, Hindus numbered 4.692.548 people, Buddhists numbered 2.016.564 people, Confucians numbered 74.899 people, and 117.412 people other than these 6 religions.(satudata.kemenag.go.id, 2022)

If we focus on East Java Province with a population of 41.311.181 people in East Java, we will find that the number of followers of the Islamic religion is 40.179.566 people, followers of the Christian religion are 679.059 people, followers of the Catholic religion are 273.800 people, followers of the Hindu religion are 104.620 people. There are 69.779 Buddhists, 2.029 Confucians, and 2.328 followers of other religions or beliefs.(satudata.kemenag.go.id, 2022)

Data on plurality above both ethnic and religious plurality make Indonesia, according to J.S Furnivall, Indonesia worthy of being a country with a plural society.(Furnivall, 2014) On the one hand, the plurality of religions in Indonesia is a wealth and advantage for the Indonesian people, but on the other hand, this diversity holds enormous potential for conflict. Nasikun believes that the characteristic of a plural society is that it is prone to conflict,(Nasikun, 1987)so the plurality that exists in Indonesia must be managed well so that this plurality becomes a national wealth rather than becoming a source of conflict between religions.(Azra, 2007)Efforts to maintain religious plurality in Indonesia are the government's concern as stated in Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia which guarantees the freedom of each resident to embrace their own religion. Apart from that, the main door to maintaining diversity in the country with the largest number of Muslims is through efforts to form a Muslim society that is tolerant of differences. Through these efforts, Indonesia is expected to be able to produce Muslims who can respect differences, who are able to provide space for other communities to exercise the right to embrace religion, the right to carry out religious activities, the right to build places of worship, and so on. So that Indonesia can become a portrait of the world as a country with friendly Muslims with differences.

There are several studies on the theme of tolerance between religious communities which are worthy of being used as study material in this article, including talking about the reality of inter-religious harmony in Pamekasan and the figures of the NU elite who have an impact on the formation of religious harmony in Pamekasan; (Hasan, 2013) the formation of harmony between religious communities can be created by opening political, cultural and social channels; (Kunawi Basyir, 2014)Islamic Education process in multi-religious families;(Nasruddin, 2022) the process of implementing multicultural values in the Islamic boarding school curriculum;(Ali, 2011) strategies for forming tolerant attitudes in a plural society; (Casram, 2016) Islamic preaching in the space of religious harmony;(Badan Litbang dan Diklat Puslitbang Kehidupan Keagamaan, n.d.) efforts to build a tolerant attitude based on the values in al-Qur'an;(Ghazali, 2022) offering an attitude from tolerance between religious communities to cooperation;(Kuntowijoyo, n.d.) ideas related to solving religious problems where the output of this idea is to establish religious harmony and make Islam in Indonesia a blessed Islam.(Syam, 2018)

Based on existing research, this research aims at overcoming the gap that a plural society is one of the structures of society that has the potential for conflict,(Nasikun, 1987) especially the plurality that exists is religious plurality. This research will produce a model for forming a Muslim society that is tolerant of differences so that potential conflicts in society can be managed well. Of course, this effort will produce a social order that is able to live side by side in harmony. This research aims at revealing the reality of harmony between religious communities and strategies for forming a Muslim society that is tolerant of differences in Pengalangan Village, Gresik, East Java. A village that has religious plurality, Islam and Hinduism, with the majority embracing Islam. A village that has Muslims who can provide space for Hindus to exercise their rights to embrace and practice their worship.

Pengalangan Village is one of the villages located in Gresik Regency with a population of 5,883 people, 574 people are Hindu and 5,309 people are Muslim. There are 7 mosques and 2 temples, the Kerta Bumi temple in Bongso Wetan Hamlet and the Kerta Bhuana temple in Bongso Kulon Hamlet which is adjacent to the mosque, madrasa, and Islamic boarding school. With this diversity, the people of Pengalangan Village can be said to be a plural society.(Nasikun, 1987)A miniature of the Indonesian nation-state. A very interesting locus to research so that it can provide fragments as a model of harmony between religious communities in this country.

Harmonious relations between the religious communities of Pengalangan Village can be seen from; 1) the attitude of mutual help between neighbors, 2) can also be seen from the Muslim graves and Hindu graves located in one place side by side. 3) The Muslims working together to help with both funding and energy in the construction of Hindu houses of worship. 4) Muslims also take part in maintaining security and watching with pleasure during the ogoh-ogoh ritual activities which are paraded around the village ahead of Nyepi Day. 5) In order to respect Hindus, on the Nyepi, the Muslims of Pengalangan Village turn off the terrace lights and do not offer pujian (the tradition of reciting shalawat accompanied by adzan and iqamah) for a while, so that only adzan and iqamah are heard when the Muslim prayer time arrives.The social facts of muslim society in the Pengalangan Village Gresik provide a very clear picture regarding the building of a Muslim society that is

tolerant of differences, giving rise to a sense of mutual understanding, mutual respect, mutual trust between Muslims and Hindus.

This study employs a qualitative approach through ethnographic study. The primary data sources in this research are Islamic religious figures, Hindu religious figures and community figures who were informants in interviews as well as the reality of harmonious life between Muslims and Hindus in Pengalangan Village who were the objects of observation.

## **A. The Reality of Harmonious Life Between Religious People in Indonesia**

Indonesia, as a country with a pluralistic composition of society, really needs a concept of harmony between religious communities.(Amrulloh, 2018)The wasatiyaIslamic values are realized through the attitudes of tawazun (balanced), i'tidal(straight and firm), tasammuh (tolerance), musawa (egalitarian), shura (deliberation), 'islah (reform), awlawiya(putting priorities first), tatawur wa 'ibtikar(dynamic and innovative).(Fahri & Zainuri, 2019)In line with wasatiyaIslamic values, Thalchah Hasan offers an inclusive Islamic concept. A concept to create a tolerant Muslim community. The inclusive Islamic concept offered is the value of ta'aruf(knowing each other) tawasut (moderate) tasammuh(tolerant) ta'awun(mutual help) tawazun (harmony).(Muhammad Tholhah Hasan, 2016) Talking harmony between religious communities in Indonesia cannot be separated from those values. Especially in social life in Pengalangan. Muslims really hold tightly to both wasatiya Islamic values and inclusive Islamic values. The Muslims of Pengalangan Village have a willingness to understand the teachings of Hindus (ta'aruf) so that they can know the boundaries in social and social interaction with Hindus. Apart from ta'aruf, Pengalangan Muslims also uphold tolerance between religions (tasammuh) and an attitude of helping each other (ta'awun).

### **1. Ta'aruf: Get to Know Each Other Between Religious Communities**

Ta'arufis the main gateway in the process of establishing harmony between religious communities. By getting to know each other, mutual understanding between religious communities can be achieved, thereby reducing the potential for misunderstanding between religious communities.(Muhammad Tholhah Hasan, 2016)The attitude of getting to know each other between religious communities is not only in aspects of social life such as neighbors but more than that. Getting to know the teachings of Hindus is very important for Muslims. By understanding the teachings of Hindus, Muslims can understand the boundaries that are not permitted so that there will be no attitudes or actions that can hurt. This attitude is what Tholhah Hasan means that the attitude of getting to know each other is the main door to harmony between religious communities.(Muhammad Tholhah Hasan, 2016)

### **2. Tasammuh: An Attitude of Respect for Others in Exercising their Rights**

Tasammuhis an attitude of respect for followers of other religions to exercise their religious rights.(Jamarudin, 2016)This attitude of respect for adherents of other religions can take the form of a Muslim turning off the terrace lights when Hindus celebrate Nyepi Day and also temporarily not singing pujian (chanting shalawat between adhan and iqama) before prayer time. The attitude of respecting the rights of other religious believers in exercising their religious rights is also very important.(Situmorang, 2019) Hindus have the right to build houses of worship and carry out worship. Muslims as the majority of course with the attitude of tasammuh will always allow Hindus to build temples and carry out purnama tilem worship and so on. Tasammuh also means a tolerant attitude. However, this does not mean freedom for a Muslim to convert to Islam one day and then convert to another religion the next day. However, religious tolerance is an attitude of recognizing the existence of religions other than Islam whose existence must be respected.(Jamarudin, 2016)

### **3. Ta'awun: An Attitude of Mutual Assistance Between Religious Adherents**

The attitude of mutual assistance(ta'awun) between Muslims and Hindus in social and community life also has a significant impact on the sustainability of inter-religious harmony. In social and social situations,

Muslims help in the construction of Hindu houses of worship, temples. Apart from that, when Hindus experience a disaster, Muslims will visit Hindu homes to help, this can be seen from the reality of Hindus when their family members die. With an attitude of helping each other in the social-community space, togetherness values, human values, and the value of national unity between religious communities will always be maintained. Ta'awunis also a communication movement between religious communities. Communication between religious communities is very important to erode prejudice and misunderstanding. (Barmawie & Humaira, 2018) With communication movements between religious followers, the potential for religious intolerance will also be avoided. So the concept of ta'awun plays an important role in overcoming religious intolerance in Indonesia. (Nashir, 2018)

## **B. Building a Tolerant Moslem Society in Indonesia: Processes Of Internalization, Externalization, and Objectivation**

Talking the formation of a tolerant Muslim society cannot be separated from social construction theory. Social construction theory provides the concept of a continuous dialectical process; internalization, externalization, and objectification. (Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, 1991) Pengalangan Village Islamic leaders confirmed these three processes. Slightly different from social construction theory, the formation of a Muslim society that is tolerant towards Hindus in Pengalangan Village begins with the process of internalizing inclusive Islamic values. Then the second process continues, namely externalization, and ends with the objectification process.

### **1. Internalization: Moment of Islamic Knowledge Transfer and Muslim Self-Identification**

In the process of forming a Muslim society that is tolerant of religious plurality, Islamic teachings relating to the theme of interaction between religious communities are very important for Muslims to have. With this knowledge, Muslims can distinguish between spaces that are permitted for interaction and spaces that are not permitted.

The process of transferring knowledge in society is called the moment of internalization. This moment will produce a stock of knowledge and self-identification abilities. (Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, 1991) The stock of knowledge for the Muslim community is used as a basis for interacting with people of other religions and being able to identify oneself as a good Muslim, namely a Muslim who is able to interact with plurality while still adhering to the teachings of the Islamic religion. The process of transferring knowledge to Muslims regarding interactions between religious communities from an Islamic perspective is carried out through primary socialization and secondary socialization. (Zainuddin, 2013) In practice, primary socialization is carried out within the family. The role of parents in teaching their children about Islamic beliefs and the rules of interaction with Hindus is very significant. Through the learning process at the family level, children from Muslim families will be able to socialize with Hindu peers. Then secondary socialization is carried out through Muslim religious-community activities. Through religious-community activities, Islamic religious figures give lectures about the importance of harmony between religious communities. In the end, this moment of the internalization process produces two very important things. Provide knowledge of Islamic teachings regarding interactions between religious communities and the abilities of Muslims as well as self-identification in the process of social interaction with followers of other religions.

### **2. Externalization: Moments of Muslim Adaptation to Plural Realities**

It is a necessity for social interaction in society. However, in a society structure with a plurality of religions, an adaptation process for Muslims towards this plurality is very necessary. In social construction theory, the process of adaptation to reality is called the moment of externalization. (Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, 1991)

In this process, a Muslim sees reality as something outside himself. The reality of religious plurality in Pengalangan Village for the Muslim community there is a normal reality. This is because the construct of

religious plurality has been formed for many years. Between Muslims and Hindus there is still a family relationship. So, if we look at it at first glance, it doesn't require adaptation efforts in social-social interactions. However, if we look at the religious teachings themselves, this adaptation process has a very important role. The process of how Muslims interact with Hindus as best as possible without crossing religious boundaries. The moment of externalization requires the outcome of the moment of internalization. The result of the moment of internalization is a stock of knowledge and self-identification abilities. (Zainuddin, 2013) Stock of knowledge about Islamic religious teachings regarding the importance of harmony between religious communities and strengthening faith is the main basis for Muslims in the process of adapting to Hindus. Based on knowledge of the importance of harmony between religious communities, Muslims can see the reality outside themselves, namely Hindus, as fellow countrymen and brothers. Understanding Hindus as fellow countrymen and fellow countrymen forms Muslims who are tolerant of Hindus. Understanding Hindus as fellow countrymen and brothers is in line with the spirit of the two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia. Muhammadiyah positions tolerance towards non-Muslims as human brotherhood based on human values, while Nahdlatul 'Ulama positions tolerance towards non-Muslims as national brotherhood in the context of nation and state. (Romadlan, 2019)

Based on this understanding, a Muslim's adaptation process to religious plurality will produce good interactions between religious communities. Muslims will remain Muslims and Hindus will remain Hindus living side by side in harmony. In the end, the internalization process produces reserves of knowledge and identification abilities, where these two things become the basis of the second process, namely externalization. The externalization process produces an understanding that followers of other religions are fellow countrymen and brothers. So, objectification is the result of the first two processes, namely Muslims who can interact with non-Muslims in harmony.

### **3. Objectification: Moments of Muslim Interaction with Plural Reality**

As described in the sub-chapter, the reality of harmony between religious communities in Indonesia, the reality of harmony between religious communities in Pengalangan Village requires the values of tolerance, knowing each other, respecting each other's rights in carrying out worship. This reality is basically the result of moments of internalization and moments of externalization. Social interaction between religious communities that runs in harmony is the third process, namely the moment of objectification. (Zainuddin, 2013) If at the internalization stage, Muslims are still in the process of receiving knowledge which will later become the basis for the adaptation process to the reality of religious plurality outside themselves, then in the objectification process, Muslims as a whole are ready to interact with non-Muslims in social and community life.

In the process of interaction with social reality, Muslims will discover new knowledge. The new knowledge obtained at the objectification stage will become the formulation of knowledge that will be transferred to Muslims at the internalization stage. On this basis, the process of building a Muslim community that is tolerant of diversity is called the moment dialectic process. This is a continuous process that starts from the moment of internalization, then externalization, continues with objectification, and circles back to the moment of internalization. (Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, 1991)

## **CONCLUSION**

The reality of harmony between religious communities can be seen from the attitude of Muslims who adhere to inclusive Islamic values and wasatiya Islamic values. Firstta'aruf, an attitude of being willing to recognize non-Muslim religious concepts so that Muslims know the limits in social interaction. Second tasammuh, the attitude of providing space for non-Muslims for the right to embrace religion and carry out religious activities. Thirdta'awun, the attitude of helping each other in social and community matters and opening the door to communication as an effort to reduce the potential for misunderstanding between religious communities.

The process of forming a Muslim society that is tolerant of religious plurality starts from the moment of internalization. The moment of internalization is carried out with primary socialization carried out within the family sphere and secondary socialization carried out within the scope of religious-community activities. This socialization activity aims at transferring knowledge about strengthening faith and the importance of maintaining harmony between religious communities. The result of the internalization process is a stock of knowledge and self-identification abilities. The second process is the moment of externalization. The moment of externalization is the process of Muslims adapting to non-Islam based on the stock of knowledge and self-identification abilities that have been obtained from the internalization process. This externalization process produces a view of Muslims towards non-Muslims as fellow countrymen. The next process is the moment of objectification. The process of preparing Muslims to interact with non-Muslims. Where in this process Muslims will gain new knowledge. This new knowledge will become material in the internalization moment. These three moments will always rotate so that they are called dialectic moments in the formation of a Muslim society that is tolerant of diversity.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

No competing interests exist in this research.

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