

The Dynamics of Religious Conflict and Tolerance in a Multicultural Village

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Abstract

This article discusses the dynamics of religious conflict and tolerance in Wanasari Village, South Kalimantan Province, considering Indonesia's multicultural nature and its complex societal diversity. Indonesia can rightly be described as a multicultural nation, and this article examines the efforts to actualize interreligious tolerance within the multicultural community of Wanasari Village, Sungai Loban District, Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan. Religious identity, which ideally serves as a shared moral and ethical foundation, often transforms into a distinguishing marker that triggers exclusivism and social polarization. This article explores the dynamics of religious identity conflicts in the public sphere, focusing on the triggering factors, forms of religious expression that generate controversy, and the tension between the spirit of tolerance and tendencies toward polarization. Through a qualitative descriptive and literature-based approach, the article highlights the role of the state, media, and civil society in maintaining an inclusive and equitable public space. The study emphasizes the importance of cross-identity awareness building and interfaith dialogue to prevent conflicts and promote social harmony within the framework of national pluralism.

Keywords: Religious Identity, Public Space, Tolerance, Pluralism

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas tentang Dinamika konflik dan Toleransi keagamaan di Desa Wanasari Provinsi Kalimantan Selatan, Mengingat Indonesia adalah multicultural dengan tingkat keberagaman masyarakat yang kompleks. Sehingga sangat pantas digelari dengan masyarakat yang multikultural. Artikel ini meninjau dan menelaah lebih dalam mengenai upaya aktualisasi toleransi antar umat beragama pada masyarakat multikultural yang berada di Desa Wanasari, Kecamatan Sungai Loban, Kabupaten Tanah Bumbu, Kalimantan Selatan. Identitas keagamaan yang semestinya menjadi sumber nilai dan moralitas bersama, sering kali bertransformasi menjadi alat pembeda yang memicu eksklusivisme dan polarisasi sosial. Artikel ini mengkaji dinamika konflik identitas keagamaan di ruang publik, dengan fokus pada faktor pemicu, bentuk-bentuk ekspresi keagamaan yang memicu kontroversi, serta ketegangan antara semangat toleransi dan kecenderungan polarisasi. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dan kajian pustaka, artikel ini menyoroti peran negara, media, serta masyarakat sipil dalam menjaga ruang publik yang inklusif dan adil. Penelitian ini akan menekankan pentingnya pembangunan kesadaran

lintas identitas dan penguatan dialog antar agama guna mencegah konflik serta mendorong harmoni sosial dalam kerangka kebhinekaan.

Kata Kunci: Identitas Keagamaan, Ruang Publik, Toleransi, Pluralisme

Introduction

Indonesia is a multicultural country with an exceptionally complex level of social diversity, making it deserving of the title *multicultural society*. Several factors contribute to Indonesia's multicultural character, including its geographical position, historical background, and the diversity of ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations (SARA). A multicultural society represents a social reality characterized by diversity in ethnicity, culture, language, and particularly religion. This diversity should be regarded as a source of enrichment that enhances shared values and strengthens social solidarity. However, in practice, identity differences—especially religious identity—often become sources of conflict, particularly when diverse religious expressions interact directly within the same public space. Within this context, tension arises between the spirit of tolerance and the tendency toward polarization. Therefore, the government must make continuous efforts to maintain peace and harmony within Indonesia's diverse society.¹

Tolerance in a multicultural society requires acknowledgment and respect for differences. This principle forms a fundamental basis for building inclusive and peaceful social cohesion. Nevertheless, efforts to cultivate tolerance do not always progress smoothly. On one hand, there are groups that support pluralism and freedom of expression within the framework of human values; on the other, there are exclusive groups that claim absolute truth in the name of religion or culture and reject differing perspectives. The tension between these two poles often generates social polarization. The concept of religious tolerance is well established and practiced in all religions, aiming to harmonize interfaith relations and foster mutual harmony. With each religion possessing its own foundational concept of moderation, social policies are necessary to integrate these religious teachings with the realities of a multicultural society. However, vigilance is also required to address threats and conflicts that emerge under the guise of religion.²

Pluralism in a multicultural society is not solely triggered by differing worldviews but is also exacerbated by political, economic, and media dynamics. Mass and social media often reinforce the dichotomy of “us” versus “them.” As a result, the public sphere—intended as a space for dialogue and collaboration—frequently becomes an arena for symbolic conflict among differing identities.

¹ Shofiah Fitriani, “Keberagaman dan Toleransi Antar Umat Beragama,” *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 20, no. 2 (30 Desember 2020): 183, <https://doi.org/10.24042/ajsk.v20i2.5489>.

² M Taufiq Rahman dan Yeni Huriani, “Toleransi Beragama dan Harmonisasi Sosial,” t.t. hlm. 34.

This phenomenon raises concerns about the erosion of social solidarity and the growing segregation within society.³

Wanasari Village, located in Sungai Loban District, Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan Province, is well known for its strong interreligious tolerance. The village is home to diverse ethnicities, cultures, languages, and religions—approximately six ethnic groups and five religions are officially recorded in the village profile. Given such diversity, maintaining peace, harmony, and mutual respect is not an easy task. Nevertheless, the community of Wanasari Village has successfully upheld a strong sense of coexistence and social harmony among its residents.

Through this study, the author seeks to elaborate on how identity conflict, tolerance, and pluralism intertwine within a multicultural society. This discussion is essential not only for understanding contemporary social dynamics but also for formulating strategies to foster a more inclusive and socially just society.

Research Method

The research method employed in this study was a qualitative approach, characterized by data expressed in the form of words, sentences, narrative expressions, and images. The study used a case study design⁴, chosen because the researcher aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of social interactions within a community group through immersive observation, allowing for a natural comprehension of how the studied phenomenon unfolds in its real context.

Data collection techniques included interviews, observation, and documentation. Informants for the interviews consisted of village officials such as the Village Secretary, members of the Community Empowerment Institution (*LPM*), local government representatives, and several community members. The selection of village officials as key informants was based on strong academic reasoning, as their positions and roles are strategically significant within the social and administrative structure of the village government.

In social research, informants are not selected randomly but rather through purposive sampling, which involves selecting participants based on their ability to provide relevant and in-depth information related to the phenomenon being studied. Interviews were conducted to obtain firsthand information, while observations were carried out to describe the setting, the activities taking place, and the individuals involved. Documentation was used to gain a perspective from the research subjects through both written and direct media sources.

The data analysis process involved several stages: data collection, selecting and focusing on relevant data (selecting & focusing), simplifying complex data (simplifying), narratively describing the data (abstracting), and transforming it

³ Rika Purwandari1, Nurhaliza Aprilia2, Tomi Aziz Khan Sir, “Peran Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama dalam Menyelesaikan Konflik Keagamaan,” *JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION* 7 (2 November 2022): 197, <https://doi.org/10.52615/jie.v7i2.261>.

⁴ Dr. Abdul Fattah Nasution, M.Pd, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*, vol. 1 (Jl. Cibadak, Astanaanyar, Bandung: CV. Harfa Creative, 2023).

into conclusions (transforming). To ensure data validity, the researcher applied triangulation, which included source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation.⁵

Results and Discussion

Wanasari Village as a Multicultural Village

Indonesia is a nation with high levels of diversity in terms of culture, ethnicity, and race. These differences make Indonesia a quintessential multicultural society. The term “multicultural society” refers to a social structure composed of various ethnic groups and other forms of diversity encompassing race, ethnicity, culture, and religion.

Etymologically, the term multicultural society consists of three parts: society, multi, and cultural. According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), society refers to a group of people living together and bound by a shared cultural system. The term multi means “many” or “more than one,” while cultural pertains to culture. Hence, a multicultural society can be understood as a community living within one area yet representing diverse cultural backgrounds.

The concept of multiculturalism emphasizes mutual acceptance among different social groups, regardless of cultural, ethnic, gender, linguistic, or religious backgrounds. In real life, conflict is an inevitable and even creative aspect of social existence. Conflict can be resolved nonviolently and, if managed constructively, can help foster harmony. It serves as a means to raise awareness of problems, drive necessary change, refine solutions, and enhance social sensitivity.⁶

In social life, tolerance plays a vital role in building harmony. Tolerance serves as a form of mutual respect and the rejection of coercion. Individuals who consider themselves superior or absolutely right tend to exhibit intolerance.

An exemplary case is found in Wanasari Village, located in Sungai Loban District, Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan Province. Wanasari is known as the only village in the region characterized by its ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. Approximately ten ethnic groups reside in this village—the major ones being Balinese, Lombok, Javanese, Banjar, Bugis, Batak, and Madurese, among others. There are also five religions represented, excluding Confucianism, as recorded in the village profile. The major religion is Islam (about 70%), followed by Hinduism (around 25%), Christianity (Protestant and Catholic, 3–4%), and the remainder comprising Buddhism and other belief systems.⁷

Since 2019, Wanasari Village has been officially recognized as a Village of Religious Harmony by the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs

⁵ Dr. Wahidmurni, M.Pd, “Pemaparan Metode Penelitian Kualitatif” 1 (Juli 2017): 5.

⁶ Tifani, “Mengenal Masyarakat Multikultural di Indonesia, Begini Penjelasannya,” diakses 25 April 2025, https://katadata.co.id/lifestyle/varia/64532eb769f6d/mengenal-masyarakat-multikultural-di-indonesia-begini-penjasannya?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

⁷ Saifuddin, Keragaman suku di Desa Wanasari, 22 April 2025.

of South Kalimantan Province. However, in practice, interreligious harmony in Wanasari has existed since the 1980s, during the transmigration era. Among other villages in South Kalimantan, Wanasari stands as a model of interreligious harmony. Institutions such as the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK RI), Indonesian National Police Headquarters (Mabes Polri), Indonesian National Armed Forces Headquarters (Mabes TNI), and the National Institute of Public Administration (LAN) have visited the village to study aspects related to religious harmony.

In an interview, the Village Secretary, Mr. Jamal, expressed his gratitude, emphasizing that Wanasari Village has never experienced any prolonged or detrimental conflict related to ethnicity, religion, race, or intergroup relations (SARA).

Wanasari Village is also popularly known as “Kampung Bali” (Bali Village) due to the dominance of the Balinese population. Hindu religious events such as Galungan, Saraswati, Kuningan, and Nyepi are celebrated with the same solemnity as in Bali itself. Cultural traditions such as Ogoh-Ogoh are also carried out in this village. Wanasari is even recognized as a tourism village that showcases authentic Balinese art and culture.

Efforts to revitalize multicultural communities can be approached through individual, relational, and ideological approaches, all aimed at fostering inclusivity, respect, and sustainable harmony among diverse groups.

1. Individual Approach

The individual approach concerns how to cultivate a multicultural personality in religious life. In recent times, many cases of intolerance have emerged within society, a condition that is particularly regrettable given that Indonesia upholds the values of tolerance and moderation within its religious teachings. Therefore, such values must be continuously reinforced to counteract dogmatic religious practices that may cause individuals or groups to become closed-minded and excessively fanatical toward their own beliefs. In the context of developing a multicultural personality, the process can begin within the family environment. Families play a crucial role in shaping individual character, especially when religious practices are carried out in isolation from other faith communities. Parents have a fundamental role in providing their children with understanding about the existence and reality of other religions, fostering openness, and instilling positive attitudes toward religious differences. Essentially, the concept of a multicultural personality emphasizes respect for one's own culture while maintaining tolerance and appreciation for the cultures and beliefs of others..

2. Relational Approach

Through the relational approach, society is encouraged to build and maintain relationships across different groups to foster mutual understanding and trust. Continuous and long-term interaction creates opportunities for cooperation,

reduces prejudice, and enhances tolerance among community members. Multicultural relationships can be established in various social settings — among neighbors, within educational environments, and through public or online interactions. The community plays a central role in sustaining these relationships. The education sector, in particular, serves as an effective avenue for revitalizing multicultural engagement, as schools with religious affiliations inherently encourage interaction and dialogue among students from different backgrounds. By utilizing such opportunities, the relational approach significantly supports the revitalization and strengthening of multicultural communities, promoting inclusivity and mutual respect within social life.

3. Ideological Approach

The ideological approach requires the government to formulate policies that are inclusive and supportive of all religious groups, ensuring consistency in protecting the rights of every community. Such policies aim to safeguard all citizens—especially minorities—from discrimination, marginalization, and harmful acts. In essence, multicultural and ideological policies must be long-term and sustainable, rooted in maintaining and developing existing traditions of coexistence. Multiculturalism has long been embedded in Indonesian society; hence, when diverse traditions coexist, communities tend to respond with respect and appreciation. However, provocations that incite intolerance or cultural discrimination still pose challenges. Therefore, consistent reinforcement of multicultural ideological policies is essential to preserve cultural diversity and strengthen attitudes of tolerance. A concrete example can be found in Wanasari Village, located in Sungai Loban District, Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan. Wanasari Village—also known as a Balinese cultural tourism village—is recognized as a miniature reflection of Bali, celebrated for its ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. While other villages in the district also exhibit religious and ethnic pluralism, only Wanasari demonstrates such a high level of coexistence across five religions and six major ethnic groups, including Balinese, Lombok, Javanese, Banjar, Bugis, and Batak. The religious composition consists of Hinduism (approximately 65%) as the majority, followed by Islam (around 30%), Christianity (Protestant and Catholic, 3–4%), and the remainder comprising Buddhism and other belief systems.⁸

According to the Village Secretary, Mr. Saifuddin, during an interview session, Wanasari has never experienced any prolonged or harmful conflicts related to ethnicity, religion, race, or intergroup relations (SARA). Wanasari is often referred to as “Kampung Bali” (Bali Village) because the majority of its residents are of Balinese ethnicity. Major Hindu religious ceremonies—such as Galungan, Ngaben Massal, Kuningan, Melasti, and Nyepi—are celebrated with the same devotion and vibrancy as in Bali itself. Cultural traditions like Ogoh-Ogoh are also performed annually. Furthermore, Wanasari has earned the title of

⁸ Jamal, Wawancara, 20 April 2025.

a Balinese Cultural Tourism Village due to its scenic beauty and authentic preservation of Balinese art and culture. The Hindu community in Tanah Bumbu, including those in Wanasari, plays an important role in maintaining religious harmony and promoting cultural values within the region⁹ The village's numerous achievements are the result of collaboration and shared commitment among all stakeholders. Stability and harmony are maintained when program planning and management are executed effectively. A strong sense of collective responsibility and ownership is the key to shared benefits and sustainable development. The village's management framework operates through several stages, including relationship building, conflict management, and action planning, all of which contribute to preserving unity and fostering interreligious harmony in Wanasari Village.

Interpreting Religious Tolerance and Pluralism in a Multicultural Society

The term tolerance originates from the English word tolerance or the Latin *tolerantia*. In Arabic, it corresponds to the words *tasâmuh* or *tasâhul*, which mean “to tolerate, to overlook, to excuse, to be indulgent, forbearing, lenient, tolerant, merciful.” The word *tasâmuh* implies *hilm* (gentleness, patience), while *tasâhul* carries meanings such as indulgence, tolerance, forbearance, leniency, clemency, mercy, and kindness. Meanwhile, the term *kerukunan* (harmony) as defined by the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language) published by the Ministry of Education and Culture, refers to “living together in a community through unity of heart and mutual agreement to avoid disputes and conflicts.”

Pluralism is a value system or worldview that acknowledges diversity within a nation. Such diversity must be viewed positively and optimistically as a real social fact by all members of society in the context of national and civic life. The essence of pluralism goes beyond merely recognizing the existence of diversity; it also carries political, social, and economic implications. Pluralism is a value system that recognizes and accepts diversity in society, including diversity of religion, culture, and ethnicity. It is not merely passive tolerance but an active engagement that encourages deep understanding and appreciation of differences, while seeking shared commitments among diverse groups without erasing their distinct identities.¹⁰

From the Islamic perspective, pluralism is considered a natural and divine law (*sunatullah*) inherent in human life. The Qur'an, as *kitâbun muthahhar* (a sacred scripture) and *hudan linnâs* (a guide for humankind), upholds pluralism as an inevitable reality of human existence as God's vicegerents (*khulafâ' al-ardh*) on earth. This is affirmed in the Qur'anic verse:

⁹ Saifuddin, Wawancara, 24 April 2025.

¹⁰ Hendri Masduki, “PLURALISME DAN MULTIKULTURALISME DALAM PERSPEKTIF KERUKUNAN ANTAR UMAT BERAGAMA” 9, no. 1 (2016): 16.

“For each of you We have appointed a law and a way. Had Allah willed, He could have made you one community; but He tests you through what He has given you. So compete with one another in doing good. To Allah you will all return, and He will inform you about that in which you differed.” (Q.S. Al-Mā'idah: 48) ¹¹

Moreover, diversity and plurality are both realities and necessities of social life. To strengthen the understanding of pluralism as a response to such diversity, it is essential to explore its foundations within religion, particularly in the Indonesian context. This is especially relevant because Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, embodies rich cultural, religious, and ideological diversity. ¹²

Religious tolerance refers to an attitude of mutual respect and appreciation for differences in belief, without imposing one's understanding upon others. It serves as a fundamental principle in maintaining social harmony and peace within a pluralistic society. In the context of a multicultural community, tolerance and pluralism are key instruments for managing diversity — not as sources of conflict, but as assets that strengthen solidarity and national unity. Such coexistence requires inclusive attitudes, interfaith dialogue, and cross-cultural cooperation.

The concept of *kerukunan* (harmony) carries meanings of goodness and peace, signifying communal life based on unity of heart and mutual agreement to avoid discord. When understood in this way, *kerukunan* becomes an ideal state aspired to by all human societies. In Islam, the concept of *tasâmuh* is not entirely equivalent to the Western notion of tolerance, as *tasâmuh* implies a balance between giving and receiving. It encompasses both the act of offering and accepting within defined moral and spiritual boundaries. The subject who practices *tasâmuh* is referred to as *mutasamihîn*, meaning “forgiving, accepting, generous, and hospitable.” ¹³

In practice, a person who exercises *tasâmuh* should not simply be passive or submissive to the extent of compromising their rights and responsibilities. Rather, the behavior of *tasâmuh* in religion signifies the avoidance of transgressing boundaries, particularly those concerning faith (*‘aqidah*). Although *tasâmuh* is often equated with tolerance in many contexts, the Qur'an itself does not explicitly use the term *tasâmuh* or tolerance. However, it clearly articulates the concept through numerous verses that outline the ethical limits and principles of coexistence. These verses, therefore, serve as the scriptural foundation for the practice of tolerance in daily life.

Human life is inherently characterized by social interaction, especially among individuals of different faiths, reflecting the human nature as social beings. Hence, interreligious relationships are expected to be close and harmonious, avoiding conflicts and fostering religious moderation (*moderasi beragama*) as a

¹¹ M Syaiful Rahman, “ISLAM DAN PLURALISME” 2, no. 1 (2014).

¹² Rika Purwandari1, Nurhaliza Aprilia2, Tomi Aziz Khan Sir, “Peran Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama dalam Menyelesaikan Konflik Keagamaan.”197.

¹³ Fikria Najtama, “SIGMUND FREUD; PERILAKU BERAGAMA (Kritik Metodologis dan Agamis)” 8, no. 2 (2 September 2016): 344.

shared aspiration. To achieve this goal, it is important for Indonesian citizens to understand the historical and sociocultural roots that make Indonesia a multicultural nation, where diversity in ethnicity, religion, language, and culture forms an integral part of its identity.¹⁴

Society must develop a proper understanding of religious moderation; misinterpretations may lead to intolerance and prolonged conflict. To foster a tolerant multicultural society, individuals must internalize the virtues of religious tolerance. In this context, Bretherton argues that tolerance is an active form of engagement that legitimizes individuals' right to freedom of religion.

Within the framework of Pancasila democracy, tolerance is understood as a principle that acknowledges the right of self-determination, meaning that every individual has the right to determine their own beliefs without infringing upon the rights of others. The realization of tolerance can be expressed through two attitudes:

Allowing others to exist and practice their faith freely without opposition; and Cooperating across different religions and cultures in various aspects of life. Thus, in a multicultural society, religious tolerance and pluralism are not merely abstract ideals, but essential principles for building a just, harmonious, and inclusive social order.

The Dynamics of Interreligious Relations

The dynamics of interreligious relations and the relationship between religion and the state within the framework of local cultural wisdom often experience conflicts of interest. This situation stems from historical events dating back to the colonial period, during which the colonial government employed divide et impera (divide and rule) politics to pit religious communities against local customs. In the post-independence period, the complexity of interreligious relations has been influenced by social, cultural, political, and economic factors. However, the historical root of these tensions lies primarily in the state's policy of controlling religious affairs, which has at times resulted in conflicts of interest and discriminatory practices toward the civil rights of minority adherents, particularly followers of local belief systems.

The Qur'an strongly emphasizes the importance of maintaining harmonious relations among people of different faiths. Numerous verses command Muslims to live peacefully with others. History records many examples of cooperation between Muslims and non-Muslims during the early development of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions maintained social relations (mu'āmalah) with non-Muslims such as Waraqah bin Nawfal, a Christian, and Abdullah bin Salam, a former Jew who later embraced Islam. The Prophet himself also once sought political asylum for his companions under the

¹⁴ Sudianto Manullang, "KONFLIK AGAMA DAN PLURALISME AGAMA DI INDONESIA," t.t., 100.

Christian King Negus (Najāshī) of Abyssinia (modern-day Ethiopia), demonstrating the value of interreligious respect and diplomacy.¹⁵

Islam, as a revealed religion, provides clear guidance and principles for living harmoniously alongside people of other faiths. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) exemplified this through his respectful treatment of his Jewish neighbors and his efforts to establish peaceful coexistence. One of the foundational principles of interreligious harmony is stated in the Qur'an:¹⁶

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ، لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ، وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ، وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدْتُمْ، وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ، لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

“Say: O disbelievers! I do not worship what you worship, nor are you worshippers of what I worship. I shall not worship what you worship, nor will you worship what I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is mine.” (Q.S. Al-Kāfirūn [109]: 1–6)

This verse clearly affirms Islam's recognition of freedom of belief and thought. Islam strictly prohibits coercion in matters of faith. Even in regions where Muslims are the majority, Islamic ethics forbid forcing their religious convictions upon minorities. The concept of majority, in the Islamic worldview, does not grant a license to dominate but rather imposes a moral obligation to protect the rights of minorities.

The principle of freedom of religion is not a modern invention derived from post–World War II human rights declarations such as those of the United Nations. Rather, it is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings, as exemplified by the Charter of Medina (Ṣaḥīfat al-Madīnah). This document, established by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), laid down the constitutional foundation for religious pluralism and coexistence among citizens of different faiths within the early Islamic community.¹⁷

The fluctuating recognition of local religions (kepercayaan lokal) in Indonesia remains an important subject of study. Following the Constitutional Court Decision No. 97/PUU-XIV/2016, adherents of local belief systems were officially permitted to list their faiths in the religion column of their national identity cards (KTP). However, this policy change also revealed the persistence of social stigma toward followers of local traditions. To mitigate potential conflicts arising from such stigma, this study suggests intensifying government socialization programs with the active involvement of religious institutions and civil society organizations to foster inclusivity and mutual respect.

¹⁵ Mutohharun Jinan, “MOHAMMAD NATSIR DALAM DINAMIKA HUBUNGAN ANTARAGAMA DI INDONESIA” 15, no. 2 (t.t.).

¹⁶ Waheeda Bt Abdul Rahman, “Relasi Harmonis Antar Umat Beragama Perspektif Al-Qur'an,” *alashriyyah* 7, no. 02 (16 Oktober 2021): 96, <https://doi.org/10.53038/alashriyyah.v7i02.135>.

¹⁷ Yohana Mariska dkk., “PERAN NEGARA DALAM PEMBINAAN KERUKUNAN ANTAR UMAT BERAGAMA” 9 (2024).

Indonesia, as a nation with a multiethnic and multireligious background, has adopted a unique position in managing religious affairs. The state does not declare itself as a religious state (*negara agama*), nor does it embrace a secular model. Instead, Indonesia stands in an intermediary position (in-between), shaped by its historical and sociological context.

Each religion possesses its own authenticity and distinctiveness, while also sharing common values with others. Religious pluralism, therefore, carries both the potential for conflict and the potential for cooperation. The state's role in regulating religious life is essential — not to suppress diversity, but to ensure that potential conflicts are minimized and that interfaith cooperation can flourish as a constructive force for national development and social cohesion.¹⁸

The Role of Government and Social Institutions in Managing Interreligious Conflict and Promoting Tolerance

Religious life in Indonesia is characterized not only by the coexistence of diverse religions with their distinct traditions and practices but also by internal pluralism within each faith—manifested through variations in interpretation, doctrine, and institutional expression. Religious pluralism is inherently sensitive because religion deals with absolute beliefs regarding ultimate truth and human salvation beyond worldly existence.

Interreligious relations must be maintained and strengthened, as Allah SWT has prescribed principles for harmonious coexistence, tolerance, mutual respect, and appreciation within pluralistic societies. This includes relations between Muslims and adherents of other Abrahamic faiths such as Judaism and Christianity, who are likewise recipients of divine revelation.

Although the government has served as a key initiator of interreligious harmony in Indonesia, it consistently maintains that the essence of harmony rests upon the responsibility of religious communities themselves, rather than being entirely dependent on state intervention. In instances of interreligious tension, the government functions primarily as a mediator rather than a dominant authority. This approach reflects Indonesia's foundational understanding that religion operates independently of state control, with the relationship between religion and the state being consultative and collaborative rather than hierarchical. Indonesia was never designed to be a theocratic state.

Within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), founded upon Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, interreligious harmony is essential for sustaining tolerance, mutual understanding, respect, and equality in religious practice. It also underpins cooperation in social, civic, and national life. However, interreligious discord remains a recurring obstacle to social progress. Human rights principles mandate respect for and protection of religious freedom. Article 29, Paragraphs (1) and (2) of the 1945 Constitution declare that the state is founded upon belief in the One Almighty God and

¹⁸ Djam'annuri, "Hubungan dan Kerjasama Antar Umat Beragama" 9, no. 2 (Juli 2015): 208.

guarantees all citizens the freedom to practice their religion and worship according to their faith.

The Role of the Government in Addressing Interreligious Conflict

1. Facilitating Interreligious Dialogue

The government acts as a facilitator of dialogue between religious communities, providing platforms and opportunities for various faith groups to engage in discussions aimed at reducing prejudice, fostering mutual understanding, and strengthening interreligious relationships.

2. Guaranteeing Freedom of Religion and Protecting Human Rights

The government ensures freedom of religion as enshrined in the Constitution and safeguards the right of every citizen to worship according to their faith. Fair, impartial, and non-discriminatory policies serve as the foundation for genuine tolerance and social harmony.

3. Building Harmony and Managing Conflict

Local governments—such as those in Aceh and Tangerang City—actively promote interreligious harmony by organizing interfaith forums, religious studies, and collaborative conflict-resolution meetings involving community and religious leaders. These initiatives aim to cultivate mutual respect, prevent tensions, and foster cooperation among different religious groups.

4. Enforcing Legal Sanctions Against Discrimination and Intolerance

The government plays a crucial role in upholding justice by enforcing legal sanctions against acts of discrimination and intolerance that may provoke interreligious conflict, thereby ensuring social security, fairness, and equality for all citizens.

The following are several roles of social institutions and religious organizations in addressing interreligious conflict:

1. Education on Tolerance and Harmony

Religious institutions provide both formal and non-formal education that instills the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and interreligious harmony. Interfaith programs are frequently organized to eliminate negative stereotypes and prejudices among religious communities.

2. Facilitating Interfaith Dialogue

Religious organizations act as facilitators of effective interfaith dialogue aimed at enhancing mutual understanding and easing tensions arising from miscommunication or misunderstanding. Such dialogues strengthen communication and prevent potential conflicts.

3. Preventing Extremism and Radicalism

Religious organizations play a crucial role in preventing the spread of extremist and radical ideologies by educating their congregations on the

importance of moderation, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence in religious practice.

4. Advocating for Social Justice and Human Rights

Religious institutions also function as advocates for groups vulnerable to religion-based discrimination, promoting legal protection and inclusive social justice within a pluralistic society.

5. Strengthening Solidarity and Social Cooperation

Religious organizations often initiate joint social activities across faiths—such as humanitarian assistance during natural disasters—which help to strengthen solidarity, empathy, and interreligious cooperation within the community.

6. Promoting Social Integration

Religious social institutions contribute to teaching moral and ethical values that serve as guiding principles for social life, supporting responsible decision-making, and disseminating government messages related to interreligious harmony. These efforts foster social order and integration within pluralistic societies.

Efforts to Manage Religious Tolerance Conflicts in Wanasari Village

According to Mr. Saifuddin, the Village Secretary, the local government's efforts are focused on promoting understanding, guidance, and socialization of religious tolerance among adherents of different faiths. All initiatives are implemented fairly for both majority religions—such as Hinduism and Islam—as well as minority religions. The role of all parties, including the village government, religious leaders, and the community, is essential in fostering harmony and mutual awareness. Cultivating interreligious harmony and awareness from an early age is considered vital. Several initiatives implemented by the Wanasari Village Government include the following: Efforts to Manage Religious Tolerance Conflicts in Wanasari Village

According to Mr. Saifuddin, the Village Secretary, the local government's efforts are focused on promoting understanding, guidance, and socialization of religious tolerance among adherents of different faiths.¹⁹ All initiatives are implemented fairly for both majority religions—such as Hinduism and Islam—as well as minority religions. The role of all parties, including the village government, religious leaders, and the community, is essential in fostering harmony and mutual awareness. Cultivating interreligious harmony and awareness from an early age is considered vital. Several initiatives implemented by the Wanasari Village Government include the following:

¹⁹ Saifuddin, Keragaman suku di Desa Wanasari. 22 April 2025

1. Wanasari Tourism Village in Tanah Bumbu Showcasing Traditional Balinese Arts



Figure 1. Balinese traditional dance performance at Wanasari Tourism Village (Source: Tanah Bumbu Regency Media Center)

Wanasari Tourism Village features distinctive Balinese art as one of its cultural attractions. Located in Sungai Loban District, Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan Province, the village is inhabited by residents originally from Bali who migrated decades ago through the government's transmigration program. The village is often referred to as a "miniature Bali" due to its rich preservation of Balinese traditions, art, and culture. The residents are also known for their craftsmanship in wood carving and sculpture. During major Hindu religious celebrations, the community performs various traditional Balinese arts that serve as a cultural attraction. The traditions and culture of the Balinese community in Wanasari continue to thrive, giving visitors the impression of being on the Island of the Gods—Bali itself.²⁰

²⁰ Media Center, "Desa Wisata Wanasari Tanah Bumbu Tawarkan Kesenian Khas Bali," diakses 20 Mei 2025, <https://mc.tanahbumbukab.go.id/desa-wisata-wanasari-tanah-bumbu-tawarkan-kesenian-khas-bali/>.

2. Tanah Bumbu Regency Government Supports Pesona Melasti 2025



Figure 2. Tanah Bumbu Regency Government supports the religious event “Pesona Melasti” (Source: Tanah Bumbu Regency Media Center)

The Tanah Bumbu Regency Government has demonstrated its commitment to supporting religious activities through the *Pesona Melasti 2025* event, part of the series of celebrations for Nyepi Day marking the Saka New Year 1947. The event was held at Madani Beach, Sungai Loban District, on Wednesday, March 26, 2025.²¹



Figure 3. Documentation of the Pesona Melasti event in Wanasari Village (Source: Tanah Bumbu Regency Media Center)

²¹ Media Center, “Pemkab Tanah Bumbu Dukung Pesona Melasti 2025,” diakses 19 Mei 2025, <https://mc.tanahbumbukab.go.id/pemkab-tanah-bumbu-dukung-pesona-melasti-2025/>.

He also expressed his hope that Pesona Melasti would not merely remain an annual ritual but serve as a medium to strengthen unity and spiritual values amidst an increasingly dynamic society.

Furthermore, the event is expected to enrich the region's repertoire of religious and cultural tourism, adding value to Tanah Bumbu while promoting local culture nationally and internationally. The event was attended by Hindu communities from various regions in South Kalimantan—including Tanah Laut, Kotabaru, Banjarbaru, Hulu Sungai Tengah, and Tanah Bumbu Regencies—reflecting the spirit of harmonious diversity in the region.

The Chairperson of the Pesona Melasti 2025 Committee, I Ketut Aman, conveyed his gratitude to the Tanah Bumbu Regency Government for its moral and financial support, which ensured the successful implementation of the event.

3. Organizing the Safari Ramadan in Tanah Bumbu Regency

The Provincial Government of South Kalimantan (Pemprov Kalsel) continued its series of Safari Ramadan 1446 H activities by visiting Tanah Bumbu Regency. The event was attended by the Deputy Governor of South Kalimantan, Hasnuryadi Sulaiman, represented by the Assistant for General Administration of the Provincial Secretariat, Ahmad Bagiawan.²²

During the event, Bagiawan stated that the Safari Ramadan program is an annual agenda aimed at strengthening the relationship (silaturahmi) between the regional government and the community.

“The month of Ramadan is the ideal moment to strengthen togetherness, enhance social awareness, and reinforce religious values. We hope that this activity will bring blessings and benefits to all the people of Tanah Bumbu,” said Bagiawan in Batulicin, Tuesday (March 18, 2025).

Coinciding with the 18th day of Ramadan, he expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to meet with the Tanah Bumbu Regency government officials, religious scholars, and the local community.

“Our togetherness during this sacred fasting period reflects unity, brotherhood, and the radiance of Islamic values in our lives. It is our hope that such an atmosphere continues to characterize our efforts in developing South Kalimantan, especially in Tanah Bumbu Regency,” he added.

The aforementioned initiatives represent several concrete efforts to actualize religious tolerance in Wanasari Village. Although the recognition for the high level of harmony and tolerance among religious communities has not yet been formally institutionalized, the village government remains committed to optimizing and sustaining activities conducted in the name of religion. Current recognition efforts are still largely personal in nature. The village government expressed its hope that all religious and cultural activities will receive

²² Media Center Portal berita Kalimantan Selatan, “Safari Ramadan di Kabupaten Tanah Bumbu, Pemprov Kalsel Pererat Silaturahmi dengan Masyarakat,” diakses 19 Mei 2025, <https://diskominfomc.kalselprov.go.id/2025/03/18/safari-ramadan-di-kabupaten-tanah-bumbu-pemprov-kalsel-pererat-silaturahmi-dengan-masyarakat/>.

proportional institutional appreciation, particularly in the form of adequate facilities and infrastructure support.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Wanasari Village serves as a representation of a multicultural society that has successfully maintained social harmony amid religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Since the transmigration era of the 1980s, the village has managed the complexities of religious identity without significant intergroup (SARA) conflict. This success is attributed to the internalization of tolerance values within families, the strengthening of interfaith and intercultural social relations, and government policies aligned with the principles of multiculturalism.

Collaboration among the government, religious institutions, and civil society—through interfaith religious activities such as Pesona Melasti and Safari Ramadan—constitutes a tangible manifestation of social solidarity and interreligious dialogue.

The findings underscore the importance of pluralism as a collective consciousness and propose a model of locally based diversity management that is relevant for strengthening national tolerance. Furthermore, this research recommends institutional recognition for pioneering villages of religious harmony and the integration of tolerance education from an early age to ensure the sustainability of a peaceful and inclusive society.

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