

## Dynamics of Multiculturalism and Religious Pluralism: Strategies for Building Social Cohesion in Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the intricate relationship between religion and multiculturalism in Indonesia, a nation marked by its rich cultural diversity and complex religious dynamics. The research aims to examine how these factors contribute to societal harmony or conflict. Utilizing a qualitative approach, this study conducts a literature analysis, drawing from a wide range of scholarly sources on religion, multiculturalism, and interfaith harmony in the Indonesian context. The findings indicate that while multiculturalism and religious pluralism offer frameworks for coexistence, challenges persist due to historical tensions and socio-political factors. The analysis highlights the role of perception in conflict dynamics, emphasizing that differences in communication styles, ethical norms, and religious beliefs can escalate tensions. Conversely, effective interfaith dialogue and inclusive policies can promote harmony. The study concludes that fostering a deeper understanding of multiculturalism and an inclusive approach to religion is crucial for reducing conflicts and enhancing societal cohesion. Addressing underlying socio-economic and political factors is essential for sustainable peace and unity in Indonesia.

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## INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a pervasive phenomenon that has been extensively studied by various scholars and researchers across disciplines, including psychology, sociology, political science, and organizational behavior. At its core, conflict can be defined as a struggle over values, scarce resources, and incompatible interests, where the parties involved aim to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals. Conflict arises from diverse sources, such as poor communication, differing interests, contradicting values, leadership styles, and personality differences.

According to Coser, social conflict is "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals" (Foya & Chigwanda, 2023). Conflict is also seen as an outgrowth of the diversity that characterizes our thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and social systems, making it a natural phenomenon (Foya & Chigwanda, 2023).

Conflict can be triggered by different views and conflicting views, as well as poor communication, misunderstandings, and actions perceived as detrimental to the other party (Purwoko, 2019). Perception plays a crucial role in conflict, as individuals or groups may perceive their interests as incompatible and resort to escalated competition and interference (Suppiah & Rose, 2006; Foya & Chigwanda, 2023; Purwoko, 2019).

The costs of conflict can be significant, both in terms of personal and organizational well-being. Damaged relationships, reduced productivity, and increased stress are just a few of the potential consequences (Suppiah & Rose, 2006). Understanding the nature, causes, and dynamics of conflict is essential for developing effective strategies to manage and resolve it.

Differences, whether they be cultural, religious, political, or even personal, can profoundly influence the dynamics and outcomes of conflicts. Understanding the psychological and contextual factors that underlie these differences is crucial in navigating and resolving such conflicts effectively (Juergensmeyer, 2006).

Intense, severe, and long-lasting conflicts often foster a distinct "culture" that shapes the representation and perception of one's own group and the adversary group (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005).

This context-dependent culture can exacerbate differences and make it challenging to find common ground. Personality traits, which are influenced by factors such as culture, family, and role, can also lead to varying conflict resolution styles. Individuals from different backgrounds may perceive and manage conflicts differently, and these differences can stem from factors like age, gender, and nationality (Gbadamosi et al., 2014). The concept of "face" - how individuals see themselves in relation to others - is another cultural factor that can impact conflict management strategies (W, 2017).

Intercultural conflicts can also arise from differing communication styles, ethical norms, and perceptions of acceptable behavior (Dumitrașcu-Băldău & Dumitrașcu, 2019). Navigating these cultural differences often requires the involvement of a third-party mediator who can help bridge the gap and

facilitate constructive dialogue (W, 2017). While some studies have found minimal differences in conflict management across cultures, others have highlighted the significant impact that cultural factors can have (Gbadamosi et al., 2014). Ultimately, the way differences are acknowledged, understood, and addressed can greatly influence the trajectory and resolution of conflicts in both organizational and interpersonal settings.

Religion has long been a significant factor in shaping human societies, culture, and, at times, the course of history. The complex relationship between religion and conflict is a subject that warrants close examination, as it has profound implications for understanding and resolving global tensions (Fox & Sandler, 2005).

One of the primary ways in which religion can influence conflict is through its role in shaping individual and group identity. Religious beliefs and affiliations can serve as a powerful source of belonging and community, but they can also lead to the exclusion and marginalization of those who do not share the same beliefs (Kadri & Abdelsalam, 2020). This can create an "us vs. them" mentality that can escalate tensions and increase the likelihood of conflict.

Additionally, religious institutions and leaders can wield significant influence and authority within their respective communities. When these religious authorities become embroiled in political or ideological disputes, their words and actions can have a significant impact on the behavior of their followers, potentially exacerbating existing conflicts or even igniting new ones.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that religion is not inherently more prone to violence or conflict than other belief systems (Kmec et al., 2015). The relationship between religion and conflict is complex and multifaceted, and often involves a complex interplay of social, economic, and political factors.

Ultimately, the role of religion in conflict is a subject that requires nuanced analysis and a deep understanding of the various contexts in which it operates. By carefully examining the ways in which religion can shape and influence conflict, we can develop more effective strategies for promoting peace and resolving global tensions.

Indonesia, a diverse nation with a rich cultural heritage, has witnessed its fair share of religious conflicts throughout its history. The country's remarkable diversity, encompassing over 300 ethnic groups and a wide range of religious beliefs, has been both a blessing and a challenge.

Historically, Indonesia has been influenced by various religious traditions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity (Ikasari, 2020). The coexistence of these faiths has not always been peaceful, as evidenced by the occasional eruption of conflicts between different religious communities (Cathrin & Wikandaru, 2023).

One notable example of religious conflict in Indonesia's history is the Moluccan Conflict, which took place from 1999 to 2002 (Asaddudin, 2022). The conflict was primarily driven by tensions between Christian and Muslim

communities in the Maluku Islands, and it resulted in the deaths of thousands of people.

Another significant religious conflict in Indonesia's history was the Sampang Incident, which occurred in 2012 (Takdir, 2017). This conflict involved clashes between the Sunni and Shia Muslim communities in the Sampang regency of East Java, resulting in the displacement of numerous Shia families. It is important to note that religious conflicts in Indonesia are not limited to specific regions or communities. Rather, they are a nationwide phenomenon, with tensions often exacerbated by political factors and the manipulation of religious differences by certain groups (Susanto, 2017).

The Dutch colonial administration's handling of religious affairs in Indonesia has also played a role in the emergence of religious conflicts. Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, a Dutch scholar and advisor on Islamic affairs, advocated for a policy that sought to control and limit the influence of Islam in the colony (Benda, 1958). This approach, while aimed at maintaining colonial control, contributed to the marginalization of certain religious communities and the escalation of tensions.

Addressing the complex and multifaceted issue of religious conflicts in Indonesia requires a comprehensive and nuanced approach. The government's policy of recognizing and financially supporting various religious communities has been a significant step in promoting religious harmony (Jones, 1976). However, more needs to be done to address the underlying social, political, and economic factors that contribute to the emergence of religious conflicts. Encouraging interfaith dialogue, promoting religious tolerance, and addressing the root causes of conflict are crucial to building a more harmonious and inclusive society in Indonesia.

Religious terrorism also has a long and complex history in Indonesia, a country known for its religious diversity and tolerance. The reasons behind the emergence of such activities are manifold, and understanding them is crucial in addressing this pressing issue.

One of the key factors that has contributed to the rise of religious terror in Indonesia is the perception among certain groups that the country is in a state of war (Putra & Sukabdi, 2013). These individuals believe that their actions, including suicide bombings, are noble and justified in the face of what they perceive as a threat to their religious beliefs and way of life (Putra & Sukabdi, 2013).

Moreover, the targeting of the West and the Indonesian government as perceived allies of the "invader of Muslim countries and a representative of evil" has also fueled the growth of religious terrorism in the archipelago (Putra & Sukabdi, 2013).

Following the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, Indonesia experienced a surge in separatist and inter-communal violence, with terrorism becoming a hallmark of these conflicts (Piggott, 2010). The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Free Papua Movement (OPM) both utilized terrorist tactics to further their secessionist agendas, with economic factors playing a significant role in the process (Piggott, 2010).

The Indonesian government has responded to this threat with a hard-power approach, seeking to "destroy individual terrorist cells, their leaders, their funding and logistic pipelines as well as their immediate support network" (Bangun, 2023). However, some experts argue that this approach has not been entirely effective, as it has "fostered religious intolerance, the burning of houses of worship, and frustration with the ideology of Islam" among the broader Indonesian Muslim community (Khamdan & Wiharyani, 2018).

To address the root causes of religious terrorism, a more comprehensive and nuanced approach is needed. This should include efforts to promote interfaith dialogue, address economic and social inequalities, and strengthen the principles of Pancasila - Indonesia's state ideology that emphasizes religious pluralism and tolerance (Khamdan & Wiharyani, 2018). Ultimately, the prevention of religious terrorism in Indonesia will require a sustained commitment to fostering a society that embraces diversity, rejects extremism, and upholds the values of peaceful coexistence.

With the background explained above, this article intends to examine the relationship between religion and multiculturalism in Indonesia, as well as efforts to build harmony between religious communities through a normative theological approach.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Indonesia is a highly diverse country, with a rich tapestry of ethnic, cultural, and religious identities that have coexisted for centuries. This diversity is a source of both strength and challenge, as the country navigates the dynamics of multiculturalism and religious pluralism. The unique character of Indonesia's diversity is marked by its strong democratic values and tradition of tolerance, where the majority Muslim population prioritizes togetherness and unity over divisive differences across the diverse archipelago. This deep-rooted ethos of inclusivity and harmony among the country's myriad ethnic, cultural, and religious communities has been a cornerstone of Indonesia's national identity and social cohesion.

However, after Indonesia's independence, these historic divisions based on ethnicity, culture, and religion have been gradually overcome. There has been a concerted national effort to foster a greater sense of shared national identity and mutual understanding among the diverse communities across the archipelago. This has involved promoting policies and educational initiatives that emphasize the country's unity in diversity, celebrate the richness of its multicultural heritage, and cultivate a spirit of tolerance and inclusivity among citizens (Nasution, 2020).

Multicultural education is recognized as an essential strategy for addressing issues of intolerance and discrimination in Indonesia's pluralistic society. Multicultural education can reshape people's perspectives, enabling them to live in a pluralistic manner, maintain national integration, and strengthen their identity, rather than perpetuating conflicts between groups. Schools, as social institutions, are ideal and conducive environments to strengthen religious moderation, promote interfaith dialogue, and cultivate a

spirit of harmony and coexistence within Indonesia's diverse society. As hubs of learning and socialization, schools play a critical role in shaping the attitudes and perspectives of young people, and can serve as catalysts for fostering mutual understanding, respect, and appreciation for the country's rich multicultural heritage (Sismanto et al., 2022).

The urgency of multicultural education in Indonesia is further underscored by the country's history of horizontal conflicts, such as those that have occurred in Ambon and Poso. Strengthening the values of local wisdom in educational practices is seen as a promising approach to address socio-cultural disintegration and foster unity. The incorporation of diverse cultural elements and local wisdom into the curriculum can help students develop a deeper appreciation for the richness of Indonesia's multicultural heritage and the importance of coexistence.

Ultimately, Indonesia's ability to manage its religious and cultural diversity while maintaining social cohesion can be attributed to its steadfast commitment to the principles of religious freedom and tolerance enshrined in its constitution and social fabric. This unique national character has earned Indonesia international recognition as a model for successful pluralism and interreligious harmony.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This paper utilizes a qualitative approach through a literature analysis methodology to gain a nuanced understanding of religion, multiculturalism, and interfaith harmony within the Indonesian context. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the subject matter, drawing rich insights and diverse perspectives from a comprehensive selection of relevant scholarly literature. The research draws upon a wide range of academic articles, books, and other credible sources that delve into the fields of religion, multiculturalism, and interfaith harmony within the Indonesian context. These sources encompass a broad spectrum of topics, including the theoretical foundations of religious pluralism, the development of inclusive religious understanding within Indonesian society, and the practical implementation of initiatives designed to foster interfaith harmony at various levels. By critically analyzing this body of scholarship, the paper aims to illuminate the complexities surrounding religion, multiculturalism, and interfaith harmony within the Indonesian context and contribute valuable knowledge to the ongoing discourse on this critical issue.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### ***The concept of relationships in a social context***

Social relationships are a fundamental aspect of human experience, shaping our lives in profound ways and influencing our well-being, personal growth, and societal dynamics. According to the literature, social relationships can be understood as the connections, interactions, and bonds that individuals form with others, whether they are family members, friends, colleagues, or acquaintances.

Experts highlight the multifaceted nature of social relationships, noting that they can vary in terms of frequency of contact, emotional closeness, and the

overall structure of the social network (Long et al., 2021). Social networks tend to exhibit a propensity towards homophily, where individuals often associate with those who are similar to themselves, particularly in their core relationships, while more peripheral or "weak" ties tend to be more diverse (Long et al., 2021).

The role of social relationships in human well-being is well-documented. As social beings, we often thrive on connection, love, and emotional and physical interactions with others. Social networks have been observed to facilitate and spread positive emotions, such as happiness, serving as important sources of support and fulfillment (Long et al., 2021).

Furthermore, research suggests that the quality of social relationships, rather than just their mere presence, is crucial in determining their impact on individual and collective well-being (Feeney & Collins, 2015). Relationships that are responsive, supportive, and serve important functions, such as risk-distribution and load-sharing, are more likely to foster personal thriving and resilience (Feeney & Collins, 2015).

Conversely, the experience of social isolation and perceived lack of social connection can have detrimental effects on both physical and mental health (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2014). Social isolation has been linked to increased risks of morbidity and mortality, as well as a host of negative mental health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline (Hamid et al., 2021).

In the context of the modern era, characterized by increasing individualism and digital interactions, concerns have arisen about the potential erosion of meaningful social relationships and the implications for collective well-being (Alizadeh et al., 2023). As such, understanding the dynamics and importance of social relationships remains a critical area of inquiry for researchers and policymakers alike.

*The concept of multiculturalism, pluralism, and an inclusive understanding of religion*

Multiculturalism is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been explored and defined by various scholars and experts in the field of social sciences. According to the sources provided, multiculturalism can be understood as one of the faces of globalization, representing a new phase of global interconnectedness and cultural exchange (Pieterse, 2007).

At the individual level, multiculturalism is the degree to which an individual has knowledge of, identification with, and internalization of more than one societal culture (Vora et al., 2018). This is particularly relevant in a globally connected world, where it is increasingly common for individuals to belong to and be influenced by multiple cultural backgrounds (Vora et al., 2018). Multiculturalism is also recognized as a significant educational issue, with the purpose of affirming cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies by promoting democratic values and beliefs (Aydın, 2013).

Scholars in the field of multicultural education have identified two or three key features that define the concept. James Banks, a leading voice in the field, defines three central concerns addressed by multicultural education: validating the identities of socially oppressed groups, teaching the history of

exploitation and resistance to it, and providing empowering education to oppressed groups (Sutton, 2005). Others have simplified these features to two: the "recognition of diversity" and the "social equality" strands (Sutton, 2005).

Some experts have also highlighted the connection between multiculturalism and social justice, emphasizing that multiculturalism is not merely a description of cultural diversity, but a call for the recognition and inclusion of marginalized groups and an active commitment to social transformation (Hyttén & Bettez, 2011; Sutton, 2005).

While there may be some debate around the precise definition and scope of multiculturalism, there seems to be a general consensus among scholars that it is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses the recognition and inclusion of diverse cultural identities, the promotion of social equality, and the empowerment of marginalized groups within culturally diverse societies (Vora et al., 2018; Aydın, 2013; Sutton, 2005; Hyttén & Bettez, 2011)

However, it is important to note that some experts have raised concerns about the limitations of multiculturalism, arguing that it may encourage resentment, fragmentation, and disunity, and that it may be an inadequate response to the increasing number of people with bicultural and mixed identities, individualization in society, and increasing urban and regional super-diversity (Verkuyten et al., 2019).

Pluralism, as a concept within the realm of social sciences, has been the subject of extensive scholarly discourse, with various experts offering insights into its definition and its significance in shaping societal dynamics. At its core, pluralism refers to the recognition and acceptance of diverse perspectives, beliefs, and cultural expressions within a society, where individuals and groups are able to coexist and thrive while maintaining their unique identities (Utoyo, 2015; Grillo, 2014; Chiba, 1998; Tamanaha, 2019).

The origins of pluralism can be traced to the interplay of several key factors, including the rise of a commodity-based economy, the development of democratic political systems, and the emphasis on individualism within contemporary societies (Chang & Feng, 1998). This multifaceted nature of pluralism has led to a complex and, at times, conflictual landscape, where the coexistence of different values and practices can create challenges and opportunities for social harmony (Chang & Feng, 1998; Grillo, 2014).

Scholars have highlighted the importance of addressing these value conflicts in a manner that respects the autonomy and choices of individuals and groups, while also considering the broader societal implications (Chang & Feng, 1998). This involves striking a balance between the individual and the collective, the short-term and the long-term, and the different sides of the conflict, with the ultimate goal of pursuing the most suitable and harmonious solutions (Chang & Feng, 1998).

Furthermore, the concept of religious pluralism has emerged as a crucial aspect of the broader pluralistic discourse, emphasizing the need for tolerance, openness, and equality among adherents of different faiths (Utoyo, 2015). This recognition of the inherent dignity and rights of individuals to practice their chosen religion serves as a cornerstone of a democratic society (Utoyo, 2015).

In conclusion, the understanding of pluralism in social contexts is a complex and nuanced endeavor, requiring a holistic and balanced approach that acknowledges the diverse perspectives and experiences that shape our societies.

Multiculturalism and pluralism are two related but distinct concepts that have been widely discussed in the context of diverse societies. While both aim to address the challenges of cultural diversity, they differ in their underlying assumptions and approaches (Delanty, 2009).

Multiculturalism is often viewed as a celebration of cultural diversity, where different ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups are recognized and accorded equal status within a society (Hong et al., 2016). The emphasis is on the coexistence of distinct cultural identities, with the goal of promoting mutual understanding and respect (Kim, 2008). Pluralism, on the other hand, emphasizes the interconnectedness and interaction between diverse cultural groups, fostering a sense of shared values and a common civic identity (Brugiatelli, 2014).

One key distinction is the degree of emphasis on group identity versus individual identity. Multiculturalism tends to focus on preserving the distinct cultural traditions and practices of different groups, whereas pluralism places more importance on the individual's ability to navigate and engage with multiple cultural influences (Kim, 2008).

Additionally, multiculturalism has been criticized for its potential to reinforce the separation of cultural groups and lead to a lack of social cohesion (Verkuyten et al., 2019). Pluralism, in contrast, aims to promote a shared sense of belonging and civic engagement, while still recognizing the value of cultural diversity (Brugiatelli, 2014).

Ultimately, both multiculturalism and pluralism offer valuable perspectives on managing cultural diversity, but they differ in their emphasis and the specific challenges they seek to address. Careful consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of each approach is crucial in developing effective policies and practices that foster social harmony and inclusive communities.

The concept of an inclusive understanding of religion has been a subject of extensive discourse among scholars and theologians. Inclusivism, as proposed by Alan Race, represents a middle ground between the exclusivist and pluralist approaches, suggesting that salvation is possible only through Jesus Christ, yet recognizing the validity of other religious traditions (Pasaribu, 2023; Griffioen, 2021)

Exclusivists tend to adopt an epistemologically-oriented approach, viewing religions as the foundation for truth claims and believers as their agents (Brecht, 2012). This perspective allows exclusivists to better address how ordinary believers encounter and understand religious diversity, in contrast to inclusivists and pluralists who tend to focus more on soteriological orientations (Brecht, 2012).

The mystical approach to resolving the inclusive-exclusive dichotomy, as explained by some scholars, involves embracing the paradox and denying the absolute truth of either side, encouraging a unitive understanding that

transcends the dualistic rational thought (Mirza, 2013). This approach encourages going beyond the limitations of discursive thinking and reaching a direct, experiential knowledge of the fundamental truth (Mirza, 2013).

Ultimately, the discussion around inclusive religious comprehension highlights the complexity and nuance inherent in navigating the diverse perspectives on the relationship between different faiths and the pursuit of salvation. Scholars continue to grapple with the challenges of reconciling the unique truth claims of various religious traditions with the recognition of the potential for salvation outside the boundaries of one's own faith (Griffioen, 2021; Pasaribu, 2023; Brecht, 2012; Mirza, 2013)

*Multiculturalism in Indonesia: Thought and Practice*

Indonesia, a country renowned for its diverse cultural heritage, has long been a subject of interest for scholars, policymakers, and citizens alike. The notion of "unity in diversity" has been a central tenet in the formation of the Indonesian national identity, reflecting the country's embrace of its multiculturalism.

One influential figure in the realm of multiculturalism in Indonesia is (Kohler, 2020) who argues that the post-colonial project of unity in diversity is an ongoing endeavor. This source suggests that an intercultural orientation, particularly through language learning, may offer a means for young Indonesians to engage with different cultures and identities, allowing them to develop a unique sense of self in the process.

Furthermore, (Kerebungu et al., 2019) highlights the strategic importance of multicultural education as a systematic and integrated approach to fostering national awareness and unity in diversity. The author emphasizes that the formation of Indonesia's multicultural society cannot be taken for granted, but must be pursued through deliberate and continuous efforts, with multicultural education playing a crucial role in this process.

Similarly, (Arifin, 2020) underscores the diversity of Indonesia, which consists of many tribes and cultures, and notes that this diversity can be both a fortune and a challenge. The author suggests that while the diversity can foster togetherness, unity, and fraternity, it can also lead to ethnic conflicts, religious tensions, and other societal challenges.

In addressing these challenges, (Luturmas, 2020) suggests that the development of the educational curriculum must be based on the socio-cultural context of the community, and that historical learning plays a significant role in the development of multicultural education. The author emphasizes that historical pursuits present various historical facts of the nation, which reflect the diversity of identities and cultures.

Overall, the discussions and perspectives presented in these sources highlight the central role of multiculturalism in the context of Indonesia, and the importance of fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for the country's rich cultural diversity through various educational and societal initiatives.

Indonesia's commitment to the principle of "unity in diversity" (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika) has been a cornerstone of its national identity, reflecting the

country's recognition of its inherent cultural heterogeneity (Kerebungu et al., 2019). However, as the research indicates, the realization of this vision has not been without its complexities (Arifin, 2020). One of the key strategies employed to foster multicultural understanding has been through the integration of multicultural education across formal and informal educational institutions (Kerebungu et al., 2019).

The importance of this approach cannot be overstated, as it provides a platform for young Indonesians to engage with the concept of "the other" while simultaneously exploring their own cultural identities (Kohler, 2020). As highlighted in the research, this intercultural orientation can open up new avenues for identity development and a more nuanced understanding of the diverse tapestry that makes up the Indonesian nation (Kohler, 2020).

Moreover, the integration of multicultural values within the context of Islamic religious education further underscores the interconnectedness of these concepts (Khojir et al., 2021). The research emphasizes the potential for Islamic education to contribute to the broader goals of social justice and equal rights, thereby strengthening the foundations of a truly multicultural society (Khojir et al., 2021).

At the same time, the research also points to the need for a more systematic and programmatic approach to multicultural education, one that is embedded within the broader social and institutional fabric of the country (Kerebungu et al., 2019). The dynamic nature of the relationship between the state and civil society, as noted in the literature, further highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of this challenge (Jubba et al., 2022).

Ultimately, the case studies examined in this research reinforce the idea that the successful implementation of multicultural practices in Indonesia requires a multifaceted approach, one that involves not only the integration of multicultural values within the educational system, but also the active engagement of diverse stakeholders and the continuous cultivation of a national consciousness that celebrates the country's rich cultural heritage (Kerebungu et al., 2019; Jubba et al., 2022).

#### *Reactions and ideal relations between religion and multiculturalism in Indonesia*

In today's increasingly globalized world, the topic of multiculturalism has become a subject of significant interest and debate. As societies become more diverse, the relationship between religion and multiculturalism has become a crucial consideration (King, 2008; Mazur, 2021).

One perspective suggests that religion can serve as a unifying force in a multicultural society, providing a common set of beliefs and values that transcend cultural boundaries (Rensburg, 2017). This view contends that a normative order based on religious beliefs and values can help integrate individuals from diverse backgrounds. However, the process of differentiation in modern societies has reached a point where a religious-based normative order is no longer feasible. As societies become more complex, the utilitarian function of religion is diminishing, and its role is becoming more expressive than integrative (Fenn, 1972).

Another approach to the role of religion in multiculturalism emphasizes the need for a more nuanced understanding of religious diversity. Religious diversity is not simply a matter of juxtaposing distinct and clearly identified religions; rather, it is a complex phenomenon that intersects with other social dimensions, such as ethnicity, nationality, and cultural identity (Beyer & Beaman, 2019). In this view, responding to religious diversity requires an appreciation of its multifaceted nature and a willingness to address the underlying issues of power, exclusion, and stratification that can arise in multicultural contexts. The intricate relationship between religion and multiculturalism necessitates a careful examination of the various perspectives and the unique circumstances of each society in order to navigate this complex landscape effectively and promote inclusivity and understanding.

Indonesia, a nation renowned for its vibrant cultural tapestry, faces the delicate challenge of navigating the intricate relationship between religion and multiculturalism. As a country with a predominantly Muslim population, it is crucial to understand how religious diversity can be embraced and celebrated, fostering a harmonious coexistence among its diverse communities (Jubba et al., 2022).

The principle of "unity in diversity," enshrined in Indonesia's national philosophy, Pancasila, reflects the nation's recognition of its multicultural identity. This diversity, encompassing various ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups, presents both opportunities and challenges for the government in promoting interfaith harmony (Santoso et al., 2022).

To achieve this, the Indonesian government has prioritized the cultivation of Islamic moderatism, which emphasizes the concept of an active state that safeguards the rights of religious minorities (Anggraheni, 2022). This approach aims to avoid the potential pitfalls of religious pluralism, while simultaneously expanding the scope of existing multicultural theories to include religious identities and minority communities (Anggraheni, 2022).

Moreover, the role of political parties in fostering religious moderation has emerged as a crucial pillar of Indonesian democracy. As the country navigates the dynamic landscape of political contestation, the need to maintain a delicate balance between religious diversity and democratic values becomes paramount.

Religious moderation, in this context, serves as a unifying force, preventing the potential for identity politics to undermine the democratic process and national unity (Abqa, 2020). This delicate balance is particularly crucial in the election of regional leaders, where the risk of religious divisions and political polarization is heightened (Abqa, 2020).

Alongside these institutional efforts, the importance of multicultural education cannot be overstated. Systematically implemented in both formal and informal settings, multicultural education is seen as a strategic tool in cultivating a shared sense of national identity and promoting mutual understanding among Indonesia's diverse communities (Kerebungu et al., 2019).

By embracing the richness of its religious and cultural diversity, Indonesia can pave the way for a more inclusive and harmonious society, where citizens

of all faiths can coexist and thrive. This endeavor, though complex, is essential for the nation's continued progress and social cohesion.

Indonesia's pluralistic society requires a high degree of tolerance from all citizens to build a cohesive national identity (Tyas & Naibaho, 2020). The country's ethnic and religious diversity necessitates mechanisms for cultivating Islamic moderation while providing religious minorities the freedom to observe their faith (Jubba et al., 2022). Diversity in Indonesia has the potential to be both an opportunity and a challenge for national unity (S.Ag, 2020; Risnawati, 2019)

Religious leaders and institutions in Indonesia must take proactive steps to promote interfaith dialogue, understanding, and collaboration. This can involve initiatives such as joint community service projects, interfaith youth camps, and public events celebrating Indonesia's diversity (Tyas & Naibaho, 2020). Families also have a critical role in instilling values of religious harmony in children from an early age, as they are influential role models during this impressionable period of development (Risnawati, 2019).

Furthermore, political parties in Indonesia should embrace religious moderation as a key pillar of democracy. Identity politics that leverage religious differences for political gain pose a significant threat to Indonesia's unity and social cohesion (Abqa, 2020). Teachers, as frontline educators, can also incorporate lessons on religious tolerance and respect for diversity into their curricula, shaping students' perspectives on these important issues (Farida & Sukraini, 2021). Achieving religious harmony in Indonesia will require a concerted effort across various institutions and stakeholders, from religious leaders and political parties to families and educators.

Table 1. Summary table of research results

No	Research Aspect	Results	Reference source
1	Religious Diversity	Enriching culture, but triggering social challenges.	Santoso et al. (2022)
2	Social Challenges	Conflict is triggered by differences in values and perceptions.	Takdir (2017)
3	Conflict Perception	An "us versus them" mentality increases tensions.	Susanto (2017)
4	Interfaith Dialogue	Reducing tension and increasing social cohesion.	Tyas & Naibaho (2020)
5	Inclusive Policy	It is important to address socio-economic disparities and promote harmony	Utoyo (2015)

Table 2. Summary table of analysis results

No	Analysis Aspects	Analysis Results	Reference source
1	Public Perception	Society has diverse views regarding conflict, often influenced by media and politics.	Susanto (2017)
2	Conflict Dynamics	Conflicts are often triggered by differences in religious values and practices.	Takdir (2017)
3	The Role of Religion	Religion functions as a unifying factor and trigger of conflict, depending on the social context.	Tyas & Naibaho (2020)
4	The Importance of Interfaith Dialogue	Dialogue has proven effective in reducing prejudice and increasing understanding.	Verkuyten et al. (2019)
5	Government Policy Implications	Inclusive policies are needed to prevent conflict and promote harmony.	Utoyo (2015)

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research results show that although religious diversity in Indonesia enriches culture, it also presents challenges that often trigger tensions. Diverse historical, socio-economic and religious practice factors contribute to this complexity.

The analysis reveals that perception plays an important role in conflict dynamics. Differences in communication styles and ethical norms can exacerbate misunderstandings, leading to an “us versus them” mentality. In contrast, interfaith dialogue and community-based initiatives significantly contribute to conflict resolution and social cohesion. The main conclusion of this research is that a deeper understanding of religious pluralism and multiculturalism is essential for mitigating conflict, and interreligious dialogue is a powerful tool for promoting harmony.

Additionally, effective policies in addressing socio-economic disparities and promoting religious tolerance are critical to improving social cohesion. Therefore, it is recommended to promote inclusive policies, increase interfaith dialogue, and develop community programs that celebrate cultural diversity and promote shared identity. By adopting this strategy, Indonesia can leverage its cultural diversity to build a more harmonious and inclusive society, reduce the potential for conflict, and promote sustainable peace.

## ADVANCED RESEARCH

As a result, the researcher anticipates helpful critiques and recommendations from a range of sources to ensure the piece is flawless. Given the researcher's own limited knowledge and skills, the researcher has realized

while producing this article that there are still numerous deficiencies in language and writing.

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