RELIGIOUS PLURALITY AND THE URGENCY OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN INDONESIA

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Abstrak

>*Artikel ini menjelaskan pentingnya komunikasi lintas budaya dalam konteks keragaman agama. Fenomena keragaman agama adalah sebuah realitas yang sudah mapan yang dapat dikaitkan dengan asal-usul setiap tradisi agama dalam lingkungan multikultural. Penanganan yang tidak memadai terhadap keragaman agama-agama global dapat menimbulkan potensi masalah ketidakstabilan dan ketidakharmonisan di antara komunitas-komunitas agama yang heterogen. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menguji tren perilaku yang masuk akal yang dapat digunakan untuk membina persahabatan dan persatuan kolektif di antara kelompok-kelompok agama yang memiliki keragaman yang melekat. Artikel ini menggunakan formula indikator Luc Reychler sebagai metodologi baru untuk mengatasi masalah. Indikator-indikator yang disebutkan di atas mencakup beragam komponen yang dianggap penting untuk mempromosikan hasil yang damai. Variabel-variabel yang disebutkan di atas mencakup, namun tidak terbatas pada, metode komunikasi yang efisien, mekanisme resolusi konflik yang kuat, lingkungan yang kondusif untuk integrasi (juga dikenal sebagai menjembatani modal sosial), jumlah pemimpin yang memprioritaskan perdamaian, dan kerangka kerja yang tidak bias.*

Kata Kunci: *Pluralitas agama; Komunikasi lintas budaya; Komunikasi; Budaya*

Abstract

This article elucidates the crucial significance of cross-cultural communication in the context of religious diversity. Religious diversity is an established reality that can be attributed to the genesis of each religious tradition in a multicultural milieu. Inadequate handling of the diverse array of global religions may give rise to potential issues of instability and disharmony among heterogeneous religious communities. This article examines plausible behavioral trends that may be employed to foster amity and collective unity among religious groups that possess inherent diversity. The present article utilizes Luc Reychler's indicator formula as a novel methodology for addressing issues. As mentioned earlier, the indicators encompass a diverse range of components deemed essential for promoting peaceful outcomes. The variables mentioned above include but are not limited to, efficient communication methods, a robust conflict resolution mechanism, a conducive environment for integration (also known as bridging social capital), a sufficient number of leaders who prioritize peace, and unbiased frameworks.

Keywords: *Religious plurality; Cross-cultural communication; Communication; Culture*

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary perspectives on religion suggest that it serves as a set of guiding principles and doctrines that facilitate harmonious social order and as a means to attain worldly objectives through manipulating or commercializing religious beliefs. Religion presents a paradoxical nature, serving as both a foundation for ethical principles and a catalyst for conflict.[1] The duality of religion is a recurring theme, as Johan Efendi quoted Syaiful Hamali's argument. While religion has historically espoused values such as

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[1] Retno Pandan Arum Kusumowardhani, dkk., 'Identitas Sosial, Fundamentalisme, Dan Prasangka Terhadap Pemeluk Agama Yang Berbeda: Perspektif Psikologis', in *Harmoni, Jurnal Multikultural & Multireligius*, 2013, XII, p. 18–29.

peace, salvation, unity, and brotherhood, it has also been associated with aggression and the propagation of conflict.[2]   Allport, as cited in Wrench, shares a similar perspective, contending that religion not only imparts values of benevolence and open-mindedness but also instills attitudes of intolerance and aggression. Dadang Kahmat perceives it as an ironic situation when the issue of social conflict is reduced to religious differences. Dadang posits that religion ought to constitute a system of principles capable of fostering conciliation and amity rather than serving as a catalyst for societal strife. Dadang Kahmat's statement does not entail a rejection of religious inclusivity or humanistic principles. Instead, it is grounded in the observation of social conflicts.[3] frequently arise, with religion frequently being implicated as a contributing factor.

In his "Public Religion in the Modern World" work, Jose Casanova posits that a dual nature characterizes religion. On the one hand, it imparts teachings on the virtues of inclusivity, universality, and transcendence. On the other hand, it also embodies exclusivity, particularity, and primordialism traits. Misunderstandings and mutual suspicion between these entities are frequently mishandled, exacerbating interfaith conflict.[4]

The teachings of various religions emphasize the importance of fraternity, harmony, and fostering a sense of unity among adherents of the same faith and those who follow different religious

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[2]Johan Efendi dalam Syaiful Hamali, 'Konflik Dan Keraguan Individu Dalam Perspektif Psikologi Agama', *Al-Adyan: Jurnal Studi Lintas Agama*, 8.1 (2013), p. 27–44.

[3]Dadang Kahmat, *Sosiologi Agama, Potret Agama dalam Dinamika Konflik, Pluralisme, dan Modernitas*, (Cet. I, Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2011), p. 170.

[4]Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994

beliefs.[5] According to Emile Durkheim, religion reinforces a sense of solidarity and social obligation through various mechanisms, including its relationship with society. Religion is a cohesive force for human aspirations, a foundation for moral principles, a means of establishing social structure and personal tranquility, and a mechanism for elevating and refining human behavior.[6] Religion has been observed to serve as a mechanism of social control,[7] promoting unity rather than exacerbating divisions, as posited by scholars such as Casanova and Dadang Khmat.

By illuminating each devotee, the true purpose of their faith and so helping to preserve the principles that underpin social cohesion, a greater sense of tolerance is being fostered among those who practice diverse religious traditions. According to Maftuh Basyuni, in order for religious people to preserve their brotherhood as religious people while also striking a balance between their interests and the interests of religious organizations, they need to be wise and mature.[8] Religion is not a tool that should be used to attain the short-term goals and interests of either individuals or communities. However, religion is a role model for achieving the purpose of human life that is more substantial.

The existence of religious plurality is an inevitable reality, and the origin of every faith is a multicultural society. Problems of

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[5]Dadang Kahmat, *Sosiologi Agama,* p. 52-54.

[6]Laode Monto Bauto, 'Perspektif Agama dan Kebudayaan dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat Indonesia (Suatu Tinjauan Sosiologi Agama)', *Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu Sosial*, 23.2 (2016), 11 <https://doi.org/10.17509/jpis.v23i2.1616>.

[7]Asep Muksin, "Menuju Harmoni dalam Keragaman Perspektif Al-Qur'an" *Rausyan Fikr: Jurnal Ilmu Studi Ushuluddin dan Filsafat,* Vol. 18 No. 2 Desember (2022), 247-272. https://jurnal.uindatokarama.ac.id/index.php/rsy/article/view/1079

[8]M. Maftuh Basyuni, Kebijakan dan Strategi Kerukunan Umat Beragama (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat, 2008.

insecurity and conflict between different religious groups may arise if the diversity of the world's religions needs to be treated appropriately.[9] It is something that has already taken place in monotheistic religions. It is vital to have the appropriate approaches to find solutions to the problems between different religions. This article aims to investigate potential patterns of behavior that could be used to cultivate harmony and social cohesiveness among religious communities destined to be diverse.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In Indonesia, intercultural communication and harmony has been relevant; and therefore, the fenomena of the topic is urgently necessary to take into account. In this study, I employ Luc Reychler's integrative-social solution in order to assess the fenomena, as we will see in the next sections.

Integrative commitment to establishing peaceful and harmonious relations among the world's religions is one aspect of that commitment. First, Luc Reychler's formula on indicators as an alternate approach to problem-solving remains relevant to this topic. The indicators include effective communication channels, an effective arbitration system, an integrative climate (bridging social capital), a critical mass of peace leadership, and just structures.[10]

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First and foremost, there needs to be a reliable method of dispute resolution. Within this study, the legal system, in all its

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[9]Doddy S Truna, "Islam and Religious Pluralism in Indonesia," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 2, no. 2 (2022): 225–232.

[10]Luc Reychler, *Challenges of Peace Reasearch*, dalam Nurkholik Affandi, *Harmoni Dalam Keragaman (Sebuah Analisis Tentang Konstruksi Perdamaian Antar Umat Beragama)*, Lentera Jurnal Vol: XV No. 1, Juni 2012, p. 74-80.

iterations, including formal, non-formal, and informal, plays a significant part in developing peaceful societies. It will help build security and stability through the institutionalized legal system established in society. Individuals will no longer be required to worry about the forces that want to subjugate or control them if the rights they are entitled to as an efficient and fair legal system protects members of society. The existence of an efficient system of arbitration has ramifications for an order of life that is based on legal certainty. As a result, the borders between truth and lie in the social system become more prominent.

Second, an *integrative climate (bridging social capital)* needs to be integrated. This component of constructing peace is inseparable mainly from the preceding, establishing effective communication channels and an effective justice system.[11]. This third aspect, from the perspective of the author, refers more to the conditions that are the outcome or impact of the existence of a communication system that is effective and an effective judicial system. It will do so by establishing communication channels that are both efficient and effective, so contributing to the creation of a scenario that is favorable to the establishment of peace. An integrative climate is a scenario and condition in society that is conducive and leads to a peaceful atmosphere that exists in society. It is typically defined by the existence of non-formal institutions that are incarnated in a communal tradition.

Third, there has to be a *critical mass of peace leadership*, that is, a critical mass of people in leadership positions within the peace movement. This component is connected to the presence of initiative or leadership personalities capable of preventing conflict or the

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[11]Novianty Elisabeth Ayuna, "Peran Komunikasi Dalam Proses Akulturasi Sistem Sosial Lokal," *Technomedia Journal* 8, no. 1 (2023): 35–51.

existence of a group of figures who are adequate in number and have a significant amount of influence to prevent conflict. Because the position of figures in society has the job of a mediator in every conflict, it is vital to have many figures in life, especially in resolving conflicts. It is especially true when it comes to the resolution of conflicts. Formal and informal leaders are included in the group of individuals or leaders being discussed here. Formal leaders are typically associated with government posts or political positions. Some examples of formal leaders include the village head (also known as *kepala desa*), the regent (*bupati*), and parliamentary members (*Dewan Perwakilan and Rakyat* - DPR). Religious leaders, such as ulama, kyai, priests, monks, and community leaders, such as traditional leaders and heads of associations or groups, are typically classified as non-formal leaders.

Fourth, there ought to be a *just structure*. This aspect is connected to an attempt to establish a justice system in the workings of social life. A just structure incorporates different aspects, such as an economic justice system, that is, a just social system, an education system that teaches the community, and other educational and social systems that assist the development of a just life order. It is essential for there to be some legal system in place within a society in order to accomplish the goal of having a just society. Just structure is a foundation that aims to construct a lawful and orderly society in compliance with existing regulations. A just structure is typically embodied in the system of the government in the form of a set of laws that regulate the order of life in the sectors of economics, social education, and culture to foster the well-being of the people.

Regarding religious plurality, scholars have proposed various solutions to the challenge of addressing insecurity in the context of religious diversity. Several individuals, including John

Hick, have presented these solutions; a cross-cultural perspective, a multicultural approach by Brian Fay; esotericism by Schuon; and perennial philosophia by Hussein Nasr.

John Hick proposes a cross-cultural approach to tackle the issue of religious diversity. The present methodology postulates the presence of a solitary, boundless divine entity (commonly known as the Almighty) who bears the responsibility for the diverse religious outlooks and convictions embraced by people. According to Hick, the act of one religion claiming superiority over others and condemning them as incorrect is not justifiable. Furthermore, providing a justification for the validity or invalidity of various religious practices is also not justifiable. In his "On Grading Religions," Hick aims to assess religions as all-encompassing traditions rather than isolating them as distinct religious phenomena.

Nevertheless, this methodology is considered unfeasible in practice. According to Hick's argument, various religious traditions are equally effective in enabling individuals to transition from a self-centered perspective to a perspective centered on the divine. In this case, Hick performs an examination of standards and methods for evaluation that may offer benefits in conducting a thorough evaluation of religious culture.

Hick examines three distinct criteria individuals utilize to embrace and acknowledge the role of God's mediation in establishing a religious tradition. The initial inquiry pertains to the moral criterion's foundation on a universal moral order, inquiring whether it is present. Does the mediator's ethical framework surpass the conventional moral code, and does their pedagogy provide a superior moral outlook compared to malevolent ideologies? Secondly, the criteria prioritize the mediator's capacity to unveil a

novel perspective of the actuality that motivates individuals to adhere to it: Can the mediator facilitate attaining a new and improved life, and is the new vision superior? Thirdly, the criterion concerning the human response is of particular significance. Can individuals undergo the transformation and have a sense of certainty that a divine force is indeed guiding them? [12]

Hick advocates for a logical assessment of the cognitive and theoretical aspects of religious customs and an ethical assessment of the cultural manifestation of the historical development of religious faith through "soteriological effective" or a transformative life. Stenger's evaluation suggests that rational and moral assessments yield varying degrees of positive and negative conclusions, exemplars of their respective traditions. The essential religious vision's effectiveness in being transformative for life and leading to salvation is a subject of inquiry. Stenger posits that the ultimate confirmation of this lies in the eschatological realm.[13]

Stenger's evaluation indicates that Hick was unable to identify satisfactory standards for effectively comparing and evaluating religious traditions in their entirety. Stenger argues that applying Hick's criteria to particular religious phenomena is feasible and, thus, warrants consideration in matters about the evaluation of religious veracity.

According to Hick, every religious approach necessitates a distinct alteration of the individual, shifting their focus from self-absorption to devotion to a higher power. Individuals must redirect their focus away from the self in specific religious contexts by

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[12]Thomas Dean, ed. *Religious Pluralism and Truth Essays on Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion.* (State University of New York, 1985), h. 92, dan John Hick, *Problem of Religious Pluralism* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1985), 53.

[13]Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity, Hermeneutic, Religion, Hope* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 90.

establishing a novel connection with a higher power. Authentic freedom, which involves being connected to nature, history, and others, can only be achieved when the self transcends its ego. This transcendence is hindered by the fact that all religious enlightenments are distinct manifestations of a single religious standpoint. The existence of multiple religions cannot be simplified to the assertion that they all share a common experience of enlightenment or a uniform approach to exercising liberty.

Brian Fay employs the multicultural approach in his examination of social phenomena. Fay has constructed a total of twelve multicultural approaches within the realm of social science philosophy. This methodology reconciles divergent perspectives within social science through a comprehensive, diverse, all-encompassing, boundaryless, and subjectivity-oriented approach. Fay's twelve theses of multicultural philosophy include four points that are deemed relevant for comprehending religious pluralism. Initially, it is imperative to acknowledge dichotomies, refrain from employing flawed dualistic perspectives, and instead engage in dialectical thinking. As per Fay's suggestion, avoiding being confined within conflicting classifications is advisable. It is imperative to openly discuss and contemplate the dialectical nature of these categories or dichotomies. Secondly, it is imperative to avoid regarding individuals or groups as "the other ."As per Fay's perspective, personal identities are fundamentally dialogic in nature. The comprehension of oneself is contingent upon the comprehension of others, and our understanding of others constrains the extent of our self-awareness. Thirdly, the act of surpassing the mistake of selecting either universalism or particularism, assimilation or separation. Using disparities by

acquiring knowledge, gaining insights, and fostering mutual advantages is advisable.

Additionally, it is recommended to adopt a process-oriented approach, emphasizing action-oriented verbs rather than tangible products. The potential for conflict arising from religious diversity can be mitigated through the adoption of a multicultural approach by adherents of various religions. This approach enables individuals to interact with one another in a manner that is respectful of cultural differences, thereby reducing the likelihood of dangerous conflicts.[14]

For example, according to Nurcholish Madjid, for adherents of other religions to make a positive contribution to world peace through religion, they must first learn to reject absolutism and embrace pluralism. We may see religion as absolute, but we must remember that our comprehension has a comparable human quality, individual or communal. According to Nurcholish, one of the concrete directions to develop brotherhood is for a community of believers to refrain from looking down on or diminishing the significance of other individuals and religions.

Religion today faces somewhat complicated challenges. According to Bambang Sugiharto, there are at least three difficulties that are confronting every religion in today's world: the first problem is one of disintegration and moral degradation; the second problem is one of plurality and exclusivism; and the third problem is the problem of injustice. The concept of God's absoluteness is misunderstood, and outside religious interests (politics and economics) intervene in religion. These three issues are difficult to solve because of some factors, including the existence of an excessively aggressive attitude towards other adherents of other

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[14]Brian Fay, Contemporary *Philosophy of Social Science* (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 1996), p. 9

religions, the existence of an excessively aggressive attitude towards other religious adherents, and the existence of an excessively aggressive attitude toward other religious adherents. However, if the problems caused by the causes listed above can be handled, then the questions above can also be answered.[15]

The problem of understanding and the role that religion plays in society can be analyzed from two different vantage points. To begin, let us talk about the conative parts of the sentence. This aspect relates to the capacity of religion to provide society and the individuals that comprise it with resources that assist in resolving various existential difficulties. Second, its mental makeup and its components. This facet pertains to religion's role in establishing the system of importance utilized by individuals in ethically interpreting their struggles and achievements, in addition to the historical background of society and its current status.[16]

CONCLUSION

Based on such an understanding, the question of the meaning of religion in the experience of society becomes more unique and complicated than in the experience of individuals. If a society is able to understand the role of religion in helping to interpret its life experiences correctly morally, then religion will be present as its function. Conversely, if they get these interpretations wrong, religion can become a fertile ground for developing conflict in society.

As we have seen that contemporary religion is confronted with multifaceted challenges. Challenges that confront religions in contemporary times include the issue of disintegration and moral

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[15]Andito, p. 29-32

[16]Elizabeth K. Notingham, *Agama dan Masyarakat.* Terjemahan A. Muis Naharong (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 1985), p. 107-109.

decay, the challenge of pluralism, and exclusivism.[17], and the problem of injustice. Overcoming these three challenges presents a formidable task due to various factors, including an overly hostile disposition towards adherents of other religions, a misapprehension of God's absoluteness, and the interference of external religious interests such as politics and economics. However, if the abovementioned factors can be effectively addressed, these obstacles can be successfully overcome.

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[17] Perry Schmidt-Leukel, "Religious Pluralism and Critical Realism," *John Hick's Religious Pluralism in Global Perspective* (Springer International and Publishing, 2023), 67–89.

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