

Space Of Religious Moderation: The Relationship Between Muslims and Hindus in Bengkulu

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Abstract

Harmony between religious communities has become a best practice in the lives of Muslims and Hindus in Indonesia. This study aims to prove the existence of a space of moderation created by two religious groups that live side by side, and religious differences can create social harmonization. This study used a qualitative descriptive method with a field approach. This study was conducted in Sunda Kelapa village, Central Bengkulu Regency, Bengkulu, Indonesia. Research data was obtained using interviews, observation, and documentation. The data analysis of this research was carried out in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The results show that the moderation space is built on social interaction awareness to build a peaceful life together in social harmonization. A moderation model based on religious and cultural wisdom can be developed as a collective foundation in building a harmonious community life.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Relationship, Common Space, Social Harmony, Tolerance.

Indonesian society, which is pluralistic and characterized by latent conflicts, still has the potential for moderation in interfaith relations. Decades of social change have reduced the position and role of religion (Bognár & Kmetty, 2020). The discourse of religious moderation that includes all religions is described as moderation in thinking, moving, and acting (Hernawan et al., 2021). Religion refers to an organized socio-cultural-historical belief system that connects humans to an order of existence and religiosity (Alsarhi et al., 2019). Contemporary religious theorists have obscured

the modern and protean relationship between religious pluralism and interreligious pluralism (Walton & Mahadev, 2019). Religious pluralism is the best way to deal with religious conflicts if, given the right place, it can give birth to tolerance, peace, and religious progress (Asadu et al., 2020). Inter-religious relations do not always cause high social tension, but many facts show harmonious relations between religious communities. Religious differences become a social dilemma that must be monitored and limited to create harmony in the religious social space.

Religious harmony is expected to remain vibrant, with the values of social harmony intertwined in a common religious space (Rokhmad, 2016). Religious moderation aims to spread its teachings to achieve social harmony (Zeng et al., 2021). Harmony in the relationship between humans and nature is considered the main key in creating peace between religious communities (Ahmad et al. 2021). Religion affects the socio-cultural life of the community (Agadjanian 2021). In line with this, harmonious inter-religious relations will open a common space for a tolerant life (Lazzaretti, 2021). Muslim and Hindu groups built a common space to live in peace in a rural-based community environment. Community cultures can juxtapose lifestyles to complement each other (Anand 2020). The sustainable cultural development of rural communities is needed to achieve a better environment and quality of life (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2014). Religious harmony is expected to remain vibrant, with the values of social harmony intertwined in a common religious space. Religious moderation aims to spread its teachings to achieve social harmony. Harmony in the relationship between humans and nature is considered the main key in creating peace between religious communities.

The life of the Muslim community, together with Hindus, is a clear example of the potential for harmony and the best practice of social harmony in interfaith relations. According to Budirahayu & Saud, (2020), multiculturalism provides an opportunity to live a harmonious life in a society rich in religious, ethnic and cultural diversity. In many cases, such societies have succeeded in achieving social harmonization through cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity. So far, the study of transitional relations tends to focus on structural explanations involving transitional relations, such as the relationship between Muslims and Hindus, which is often analyzed in the context of a structural relations framework. However, the relationship between Muslims and Hindus is significant for understanding the dynamics of

inter-religious relations that give rise to the space of religious moderation. Understanding the space for interfaith moderation can expand the understanding of society as a whole. Therefore, the formation of harmonious interfaith friendships may require minority groups to tolerate discrimination against religious differences (Greenland et al., 2019; Gupta & Coffey, 2020).

The concept of religious moderation covers a broad spectrum and is generally associated with an understanding that includes religious elements (Fernández-Ninõ et al., 2019; Kanafi et al., 2021; Krok et al., 2021; Neo, 2020; Prasojito et al., 2019). Moderation increasingly plays an important role in various aspects of life, including religious, political, legal, social, and economic (Akhmetova 2019). The principle of moderation creates a space where individuals from different religious backgrounds can work together towards the goal of social justice and shared prosperity (Lu & Yang, 2020). Religious moderation is also considered a way to counter radicalism by building religious tolerance and avoiding radical attitudes (Thaib, 2020). Thus, through moderation, we can achieve tolerance, justice and balance (Sihombing et al., 2020).

Moreover, moderation is not only by commitment or cooperation across ideologies but rather by the limits of justification in the ideology of the brotherhood (Freer, 2017). Thus, in terms of applying moderate Islam to a pluralistic society, it is possible to use the concept of moderate Islam by integrating it into Islamic education. Its implementation provides a complete and solid picture, blending realistic thoughts about religious moderation (Muhtifah et al., 2021).

Another essential element of a culture of moderation is a new lifestyle that considers all human needs, respects the potential of the natural environment, and is characterized by intra-generational and inter-generational responsibilities (Sadowski, 2021). One should not forget the value of sharing and moderation because moderation creates social harmony (Eko

& Putranto, 2019). The issue of mutual respect between Muslims and Hindus is essential in the effort to build the harmony of religious harmony as a social norm, where the regulatory function extends between groups and the state.

The shared space of religious moderation involves an objective view of diversity, without emotional or intellectual distortion, with mutual love, respect and tolerance between religious communities. This approach aims to create harmonious relationships between religious communities. Furthermore, if local wisdom values and distinctive cultural and religious values are combined, there will be compatibility with religious differences according to the context and situation (Greaves et al., 2020). People also view religious tolerance as a discourse related to individual interests in certain political and cultural contexts (Mulya & Aditomo, 2018).

This study is based on the view that interfaith relationships do not always last with tension, even in a contested macro environment. This study aims to prove the existence of moderation space formed by two religious groups living in coexistence. Religious differences are expected to create social harmonization, and the findings of this research are expected to provide a clearer picture in realizing inter-religious harmony.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a socio-cultural approach in the field. The research was conducted in Sunda Kelapa Village, Central Bengkulu Regency, Bengkulu Province, Indonesia. The composition of Sunda Kelapa Village's population is 715 Muslims, 507 Hindus, and only 9 Christians. This study involves several parties such as village heads, community leaders, religious leaders, the general public, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, youth leaders, and village elders. The research data were obtained using interview, observation, and documentation techniques. The data collection process was carried out through

visits to research sites to see the social and cultural interactions of people of different religions in various religious activities and different traditions. The data collected includes abstract data, such as values, views on life, and the meaning of symbols collected through in-depth interviews. In addition, data was also obtained from supporting documents such as village data and previous related research.

Data analysis of this study was carried out in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and concluding. Data reduction is the selection and sorting of primary data, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming verified raw data. Presentation of data displays a collection of data information that is arranged and gives meanings that appear that can conclude. To find research themes, domain, taxonomy, componential and analysis were conducted to identify cultural themes. The final stage was summarizing, which involved creating a narrative of the concepts that answered the research objectives.

Result

Concepts Of God And Humanity

This study found that Muslim communities and Hindu communities have similar concepts and practices in promoting diversity in society, particularly in understanding the importance of cultivating the value of religious harmony. This has been instilled early on never to take issue with religious differences. In Hindu society, known as *Catur Paramitha*, *Upeksha* means respecting and respecting others. Humans are encouraged to respect the opinions of others and have respect for others. This is also taught in Islam through *Surah Al-Hujurat* verse 13, which states that "We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may 'get to' know one another."

In both religious teachings (Islam and Hinduism), the concept of brotherhood is similar in concept and implementation. In Hindu society, the concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* is

known, which means that the whole world is one family. This concept creates an understanding that all humans are equal and brothers. On the other hand, in Islam, there is the concept of Ukhuwah Islamiyah, which includes brotherhood of faith (ukhuwah diniyyah), brotherhood of fellow human beings (ukhuwah insaniyah), and brotherhood of fellow citizens (ukhuwah wathoniyah). As long as differences are recognized within the framework of the values of ukhuwah basyariah, ukhuwah Islamiyah, hablu minannaas, and ikhtilafu ummati rahmatun, it will not cause problems because moderation implies peace, pluralism, and cooperation. The concept of religious harmony based on mutual tolerance and respect is a derivative of both universal religious teachings.

The interactions formed in society can be seen from three things, namely social, religious, and institutional interactions. These three things are important elements for the formation of harmony in society. For example, when Hindus have a party, they make a special committee to cook halal food. This condition provides a sense of comfort and avoids potential religious conflicts. The Sunda Kelapa Village community has local wisdom to maintain community harmony by involving all of its citizens in social and religious activities. This harmony is fully supported by customary and religious institutions, so that in social relations, there is no difference in treatment between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Inter-Religious Interaction

Well-constructed interactions between religious people aim to create harmony in societies. They are introduced to build cooperation, tolerance, and brotherhood early on, even though their religions are different. This is why the interactions built can create harmony between religious people. The concept of religious harmony in a common space is realized by accepting each other, respecting each other's beliefs, and helping and cooperating to achieve common goals. Harmonious inter-religious

relations do not involve contempt for non-Muslims (Nor et al., 2018). Rather, peaceful living with non-Muslims can be realized through the maintenance of human relations with mutual understanding, without suspicion and hatred. The Qur'an teaches that all humans, regardless of their religion and culture, come from the same origin, namely Adam and Eve. Therefore, in Islam, equality is emphasized regardless of religious and cultural identity.

The concept of peaceful and coexisting religions, as well as respectful community interactions, is reflected in togetherness. Space in society includes aspects of religious, social and political culture. Religious space is an integral part of the culture of the Sunda Kelapa community, formed through religious interactions between religious communities. For example, during Yasinan and Tahlil activities, Muslims invite Hindus, although Hindus attend without participating in the reading of Yasin or Tahlil. Similarly, when there are Gulungan and Kuningan activities, Muslims also attend to fulfill the invitation, but their presence is after a series of worship rituals at the temple. The Muslim community is welcomed with dishes and drinks that are served differently from what they are used to. In addition, there is the activity of attending a tabligh musibah/mourning/visitation event due to the death of a Muslim which is also attended by Hindus, while listening to information from the family. At the time of the Islamic marriage proposal, the Hindu community also rejoiced and attended the event.

The Opening Of Common Spaces Between Hinduism And Islam

The social space formed can be observed through the way Hindus and Muslims live their social lives. For example, Hindus can engage in religious marriages, including interfaith marriages such as those between Hindu women and Muslim men. In some cases, Hindu women who marry Muslim men eventually embrace Islam, but are still accepted by both sides of the family. There may also be room for negotiation under certain circumstances. However, there

may be conflict within the family if a Hindu man marries a Muslim woman, as the man is considered the successor to the Hindu religion in his family and may convert. In addition, youth organizations such as Karang Taruna show the diversity of young people from different religions who work together in committees in the village. When there is a big event, either at the national or regional level, the organizing committee involves the community without distinguishing between certain religions.

The formation of political space can be observed through the process of electing adat leaders and hamlet heads, which has demonstrated a democratic and fair division of power. For example, in the case of Desa Tengah hamlet, which has an almost equal number of Muslim and Hindu residents, the election of the village head was won by a Hindu leader who was directly elected by the community. Although he had previously received the blessing of the Village Head, the election reflected fairness in decision-making. In addition, justice is also seen in the election of hamlet heads, where hamlet heads are elected alternately according to religion. In the process of electing the customary leader, justice is shown by appointing Muslims as customary leaders and Hindu leaders as deputy customary leaders, with the consideration that Muslims make up the majority of the population in Sunda Kelapa Village.

Discussion

The concept of harmony between Muslims and Hindus has similarities, especially in the concept of *wasatiyyah* which is rooted in Islamic epistemology and is a religious belief that plays an important role in people's daily behavior (Ramlee et al., 2019). This implies a similar attitude towards human relations, even though these relations are based on religious differences. Social interaction strategy is tied to identification, intercultural dialogue, and multicultural community building as a backdrop in a peaceful environment (Szerlag et al., 2021).

Indigenous people's perspectives show appreciation, consideration of equality, understanding of place, and wellbeing (Mpofu, 2021; Wheaton et al., 2021). The implications in practical life have a positive impact on the formation of clean and healthy living characters, as well as ecological and social forgiveness. Social activities between Muslims and Hindus are built with the spirit of mutual help and respect for each other. For example, when Muslims hold parties, they serve dishes that do not contain beef or buffalo meat to Hindus, as both animals are considered sacred. Cows, in particular, have strong emotional symbolic meaning (Wiśniewska-Singh, 2021). Therefore, harmonious interfaith friendships may require minority groups to tolerate discrimination against religious differences. Hindu-Muslim relations have conservative, authoritarian, and cosmopolitan elements in nationalism and international affairs (Wanchoo, 2021). Religious tolerance is seen in the Sunda Kelapa village community. In Islam, tolerance is known as *tasamuh*, a form to realize Islam as *rahmatan li al-'alamin*.

This happens through acculturation and creates a culture of togetherness among religious believers, a natural form of internalizing religious values that affect society's social values. Religion can isolate culture to maintain harmony with cultural acculturation (Lemay, 2022). Individual social behavior is driven by internal strength based on religious values, which are important pillars in forming a harmonious, just, and prosperous society (Desky & Rijal, 2021). Acculturation is mediated by ethnic identity as a role in efforts to build adaptation to the environment to show adaptability (Nur'Aini, 2021). In other words, the concept of religious moderation covers a broad spectrum, usually associated with a relatively comprehensive understanding of religious elements. Another essential element of a culture of moderation is a new lifestyle that considers all human needs, respects the potential of the natural environment, and is characterized

by intra-generational and inter-generational responsibilities. The multiculturalism inherent in Indonesian culture provides a strong foundation for interfaith leaders in addressing cultural and religious differences. It can promote intercultural understanding and sensitivity (Kusuma & Susilo, 2020). The religious tolerance identified includes the discourses of nationalism, tolerant theology, and romantic love, and their implications in the daily lives of religious believers. Tolerance, as a societal value, has enormous importance for social cohesion and shared life (Alhashmi et al., 2020).

These values of kindness are derived and practiced in everyday life so that religious harmony is created. Cultural modernization creates a fundamental structure for harmonizing religious life in society (Afif et al., 2021). The common space of religious moderation involves seeing diversity with an unbiased observation of all phenomena to understand it and experience it as it is in facts, without emotional or intellectual distortions, with mutual love, respect, and tolerance between religious communities. As a result, a harmonious relationship between religious communities will be created. Local wisdom values, distinctive cultural and religious values, when combined, will be suitable to be applied to religious differences according to the context and situation. In this context, it is necessary to develop awareness of understanding and religious harmony, which includes the willingness and ability to respect other religions and actualize them in daily life. This can be realized through respecting and giving freedom to each religion to practice their respective teachings. The religious meaning system encompasses two dimensions: (1) an orientation that evaluates the extent to which religion can help individuals to comprehend their lives and the world, and (2) that represents the ability of religion to enable individuals to discover purpose and meaning in their lives (Krok & Zarzycka, 2021).

These good values are passed down and practiced daily to create religious harmony. In

this context, it is important to develop awareness of religious understanding and harmony, namely the willingness and ability to respect other religions and actualize them in daily life. This can be achieved by respecting each other and giving freedom to every religious believer to practice their religious teachings. The influence of family religious beliefs, traditions, spirituality, and ethnic population status influence policy development and organizational development (Mekkodathil et al., 2019). The community is responsible for passing on the tradition to the next generation to maintain social ties and religious ceremonies (Kurt & Cal, 2021). Historical experience leads to the formation of a justification strategy in modern times as a value both existentially and ideologically, and practically useful (Pirozhkova, 2021). Likewise, moderation highlights the interaction of peace-oriented and goal-oriented mechanisms in the meaning of living in harmony within the framework of religious differences.

The interactions formed in society can be seen from three things, namely social, religious, and institutional exchanges. The common space of religious moderation involves seeing diversity with an unbiased observation of all phenomena to understand it and experience it without emotional or intellectual distortions with mutual love, respect, and tolerance between religious communities. These three things are important elements for the formation of harmony in society. The important role of customary social and political mechanisms in maintaining relations is effectively realized between religious communities (Hutagalung, 2016).

The Sunda Kelapa Village community has local wisdom to maintain harmony by involving the entire community in social and religious activities. Therefore, well-established interactions between religious communities aim to create harmony in society. Humans as social beings will easily build good relationships even though they differ in religious principles. The built interactions can be based on several factors, such as interactions due to religious leaders,

marriage, kinship, cooperation, and institutions. Therefore, moderation becomes a frame of reference that plays a role in resolving religious differences, not as comparisons or discrimination (Dhital, 2019).

Conclusion

The moderation space is built based on awareness of social interaction in building a peaceful life together in social harmonization. Shared space can not only be built by structural and external forces, however, as part of the authorities' interests that occurred in response to the situation of contestation in religious relations in Indonesia. On the other hand, cultural space can form naturally through the experience of living together with two religious groups. This experience then becomes the best practice in the community in creating interfaith harmony.

The results of this study can be used as a reference for practitioners and the public to understand and apply the space for religious moderation and for further researchers to develop a moderation model based on religious and cultural wisdom as the basis for collective intelligence in building a more harmonious common life. However, this study is limited to the relationship between Muslims and Hindus in

one village community, so it does not have the validity to be a reference in understanding the phenomenon of religious moderation comparatively and comprehensively. A comparative and thorough understanding is needed to understand the potential and mechanisms of moderation in-depth and to enable the construction of a model of religious moderation that can be applied in areas with the potential for conflict.

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