

ANALYSIS OF HUMAN EQUALITY IN RELIGIOUS RELATIONS WITHIN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

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Abstract

<i>Article History</i>	<i>This study examines the importance of promoting</i>
<i>Received :03-12-2024</i>	<i>equality, tolerance, and inclusion in multicultural</i>
<i>Revised :06-12-2024</i>	<i>societies, focusing on the role of religion and the</i>
<i>Accepted :26-09-2025</i>	<i>challenges faced in achieving these ideals. Utilizing a</i>
Keywords:	<i>qualitative literature review method, the research</i>
<i>Human Equality,</i>	<i>analyzes secondary sources, including books, scholarly</i>
<i>Religious Relations,</i>	<i>journals, and relevant articles. The findings reveal that</i>
<i>Community</i>	<i>discrimination, conflict, and extremism pose significant</i>
<i>Multicultural</i>	<i>barriers to equality in diverse contexts. However,</i>
	<i>principles such as pluralism, tolerance, and interfaith</i>
	<i>dialogue provide pathways to overcome these</i>
	<i>challenges. Religion plays a crucial role in shaping</i>
	<i>societal dynamics through moral values, social</i>
	<i>structures, and cultural identities. Interfaith dialogue</i>
	<i>serves as an effective means to foster understanding,</i>
	<i>build positive relationships, and promote peace among</i>
	<i>different religious communities. The study emphasizes</i>
	<i>best practices for fostering inclusion and tolerance, such</i>
	<i>as inclusive education, open communication,</i>
	<i>collaboration among faith communities, and a</i>
	<i>commitment to peace. Ultimately, this research argues</i>
	<i>that through collective efforts, multicultural societies</i>
	<i>can develop into inclusive and tolerant environments</i>
	<i>where individuals coexist peacefully and respectfully,</i>
	<i>appreciating the richness of diversity.</i>

Introduction

Diversity in modern society has brought humanity to a challenging reality, where differences in culture, religion, language, and ethnicity interact more intensively. Globalization and advances in information technology have accelerated the integration of societies with all their differences, thus placing people within increasingly complex multicultural contexts. In Indonesia, multicultural society has become an essential part of daily life. The country is known as one of the most diverse nations in terms of religion, language, and

ethnicity, making it a fertile ground for interreligious interaction. However, this reality also requires society to find effective ways to create harmonious relationships and avoid interreligious conflicts (Nugroho and Ni'mah 2018: 23).

Human equality, which can simply be defined as the recognition of equal values and rights for every individual, is a crucial principle in addressing the complexity of interreligious relations within multicultural societies. This value of human equality is not only about recognizing basic rights but also about how individuals and groups treat one another in a fair and equal framework (Fatah, Emha, and Ismaiyah 2023: 24). This principle plays a significant role in fostering understanding and tolerance while preventing discrimination or marginalization against particular religious groups. In the context of multicultural society, human equality serves not only as an ethical foundation but also as an essential instrument for creating sustainable social harmony.

Life in a multicultural society is often characterized by complex dynamics in interreligious relations. On one hand, religious and belief diversity provides opportunities for people to know and learn from one another, appreciating differences as cultural wealth. Such diversity offers great potential for building social harmony based on mutual respect and tolerance (Amtiran and Kriswibowo 2024:1). On the other hand, fundamental differences in religious beliefs can become a source of conflict if not properly managed. For instance, differences in perspectives on social issues or variations in religious practices often trigger debates or even disputes between religious groups.

In this context, the concept of human equality is vital in building healthy interreligious relations. Human equality in interreligious relations means that every individual must be treated equally regardless of religious, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. This not only includes the recognition of the right to freedom of religion but also the right to be respected in practicing one's faith. Relations based on equality help create a conducive social environment for fostering mutual respect and understanding among different religious groups. (Susanti 2018: 25)

However, efforts to realize equality in interreligious relations within multicultural societies are not easy. Various challenges arise, especially when people still hold strong prejudices or stereotypes against other religious groups. These stereotypes often stem from ignorance or fear of differences, as well as negative past experiences. Moreover, tendencies to dominate or look down upon other groups often become barriers in creating equal relations. Religious-based discrimination remains a real phenomenon in society, where certain individuals or groups are often treated unfairly due to their beliefs (Ahmad Suradi and Dewi 2019:34).

In the Indonesian context, these challenges become even more complex due to the diversity of officially recognized religions, namely Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Each religion has its own values, norms, and perspectives on life and society. In addition, there are also local religious groups or indigenous beliefs that are often neglected or even subjected to discrimination (Ahmad Suradi 2018b:2). This situation requires society to adopt a more inclusive and tolerant approach in accommodating existing diversity.

Apart from challenges in the form of stereotypes and discrimination, another difficulty lies in the lack of understanding among different religious groups. When people have limited knowledge about the beliefs and practices of

other religions, the likelihood of misunderstandings or negative prejudices increases. Such situations can aggravate interreligious relations and hinder efforts to create social harmony. Therefore, multicultural education and interreligious dialogue become two important strategies to support the establishment of equal and harmonious relations. Multicultural education can help people better understand and appreciate differences, while interreligious dialogue serves as a platform for exchanging perspectives and finding common ground within differences (A. Suradi 2018: 46).

Furthermore, in the effort to create equality in interreligious relations, the role of the state and religious institutions is also crucial. The state must act as a fair mediator and ensure that every religious group enjoys equal rights in social life. Fair and non-discriminatory government policies will foster trust among religious groups and strengthen the value of equality. Religious institutions, on the other hand, need to take an active role in fostering understanding and tolerance among adherents. These institutions can serve as facilitators in interreligious dialogue, while also promoting the values of equality, justice, and compassion within their teachings (Shofwan 2022:9).

The study of human equality in interreligious relations within multicultural societies holds significant urgency, particularly in the context of Indonesia, which is characterized by religious and cultural diversity. A deep understanding of the concept of equality is expected to make a real contribution to efforts in creating peace and social harmony. Viewing religious differences not as a reason for hostility or discrimination, but rather as opportunities to enrich knowledge and life experiences, will allow society to become more open to diversity (Yani et al. 2020:47).

An analysis of the concept of human equality can serve as a foundation for designing strategies and concrete steps to address potential interreligious conflicts and to strengthen social cohesion amid differences. Therefore, this study aims to examine how the principle of human equality can be effectively implemented in interreligious relations within multicultural societies. The focus of the research is directed toward identifying supporting and hindering factors, as well as relevant strategies to realize harmonious, equal, and just interreligious relationships (Jeklin 2016:18).

The findings of this research are expected to provide practical guidance for stakeholders whether individuals, communities, or the government in building an inclusive and peaceful society amid religious pluralism. Through the application of human equality values, multicultural societies can create safe and open spaces for every individual, regardless of religious, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds.

Such an approach not only strengthens social harmony but also fosters collective awareness of the importance of preserving diversity as part of a shared national identity. Thus, this research is expected to be relevant not only in local contexts but also to make an important contribution to the development of human values in addressing global challenges in the future.

Research Methods

This study employs a literature review method, a qualitative approach that analyzes literature related to human equality and interreligious relations in multicultural societies. The data sources are derived from secondary literature,

including books, scientific journals, articles, and research reports relevant to the theme of equality within the context of multiculturalism.

The research procedure involves collecting literature through keyword searches, selecting materials based on validity and relevance criteria, and conducting in-depth analyses of the contents that support an understanding of equality in interreligious relations. Data collection techniques include tracing literature from credible academic sources. Subsequently, the data are analyzed using content analysis methods to identify key themes concerning human equality in interreligious relations within multicultural societies.

The researcher critically reviews each theme and synthesizes various ideas and findings in the literature to develop a comprehensive understanding. To maintain validity and reliability, this research only uses literature from credible sources and verifies the consistency of information across references. Through this method, the study is expected to provide deeper insights into the application of the concept of equality in interreligious relations and to serve as a foundation for future research in this field.

Discussion

Foundations of Multiculturalism

Cultural Plurality

Cultural plurality is one of the main foundations of the concept of multiculturalism. A multicultural society consists of diverse cultures, languages, and traditions that coexist and interact with one another. This diversity creates a broader and more complex collective identity, where each group contributes its unique cultural heritage and perspectives. The interaction among various cultures enables the exchange of values and understandings, enriching each individual's social experience. Through cultural plurality, society can find strength in differences and embrace diversity as an asset to enrich shared identity (Wijaya 2022:56).

Tolerance

Tolerance is a fundamental basis for building harmonious relationships among cultural and religious groups in multicultural societies. Tolerance means respecting existing differences, whether in beliefs, traditions, or ways of life. This attitude enables individuals and groups to coexist without imposing certain values or views on others (Ahmad Suradi 2018a:26). Tolerance helps reduce social tensions and prevents the emergence of discrimination or prejudice that could divide communities. By fostering tolerance, society is encouraged to embrace diversity as a strength that enriches collective life (Purwanti, Muhtarom, and Idris 2023:12).

Dialogue and Communication

Open, honest, and respectful dialogue and communication are essential elements in fostering understanding among cultural and religious groups. Effective dialogue allows individuals to share their perspectives, listen to others, and recognize both commonalities and differences. Good communication also helps reduce misunderstandings that may arise from different backgrounds. In a multicultural society, dialogue functions not only to build harmonious relationships but also to create spaces where every group feels valued and heard.

Thus, dialogue and communication serve as crucial tools in building an inclusive and peaceful society (Agasta and Panandu 2023:89).

These foundations cultural plurality, tolerance, and dialogue form a strong basis for developing a healthy and harmonious multiculturalism. Societies that can appreciate and integrate these principles will be better equipped to face the challenges of diversity and to build a meaningful and harmonious collective life.

The Role of Religion in Shaping Social Dynamics

Moral and Ethical Values

Religion has a very important role in the formation of moral and ethical values that are the foundation for individual and societal behavior. Every religious teaching carries moral principles that teach what is considered good or bad, right or wrong. These values help create guidelines of behavior that their adherents follow, such as honesty, justice, empathy, and social responsibility. With this guideline, society has a common standard that maintains order, mutual respect, and strengthens a sense of moral responsibility among its members. (Siti Khodijah Nurul Aula 2022:17).

Social Systems

Religious teachings not only affect the lives of individuals but also have a wide impact on the social structure of society. The values brought by religion often permeate into the social norms that form a common code of behavior. In many cultures, religion can also influence the legal systems and public policies that govern coexistence, either directly or indirectly. For example, laws or policies on family, social welfare, and education are often rooted in religious principles. Thus, religion plays a big role in determining the social system and values that are upheld in society. (Pemikiran and Volume 2020:67).

Identity and Culture

Religion is one of the strong factors in shaping individual and group identities. For many people, religion is an important part of their identity that underlies their outlook and lifestyle. At the collective level, religion shapes group identity and becomes a source of pride and social solidarity. In addition, religion influences the cultural practices and traditions that are carried out, such as holiday celebrations, traditional ceremonies, and various other cultural expressions. This tradition enriches the culture of a society and becomes a characteristic that distinguishes one group from another. (Noor 2020:10).

By playing a role in moral values, social systems, and cultural identities, religion has a profound influence on social dynamics in society. Religion is not only a spiritual means, but also forms the foundation of social and cultural life, as well as a force that unites or even influences relations between groups in society.

The Role of Religion in Shaping Social Dynamics.

Challenges in Achieving Equality in Diverse Contexts

Discrimination

Religious-based discrimination is one of the main barriers to achieving equality in diverse societies. Such discrimination can be found in various aspects of life, including education, employment, and access to public services. For instance, individuals or groups from certain religions may face difficulties being accepted into schools or workplaces dominated by other religions, or may

encounter injustices in accessing public services. Discrimination not only undermines the well-being of affected individuals but also creates social inequality that disrupts harmony and cohesion within society (Hadi et al. 2024:19).

Conflict

Religious differences can become a source of conflict, especially when fueled by misunderstanding or prejudice against other groups. The lack of interreligious dialogue or limited knowledge of other beliefs can reinforce negative stereotypes, which may escalate tensions or even violence. Religious-based conflicts are often exacerbated by social, political, or economic issues, making it even harder to create a harmonious and equal environment. Such conflicts challenge efforts to foster tolerance, respect for diversity, and equality.

Extremism

Religious extremism poses a serious threat to societal security and stability. Extremist attitudes that reject differences or deny diversity often lead to intolerant behavior or violence. Extremism divides communities, instills fear, and deepens mistrust among groups. Furthermore, religious extremism hinders efforts to build tolerance and mutual respect between different religious communities. In the pursuit of equality in diverse societies, extremism must be confronted and mitigated through education, interreligious dialogue, and the strengthening of laws that ensure safety for all (Ahmad Suradi 2018c:27)

Overall, discrimination, conflict, and extremism are the main challenges in realizing equality within diverse societies. Overcoming these challenges requires joint efforts from individuals, groups, and governments in order to build a more inclusive, just, and peaceful society.

Bridging Differences: Promoting Interreligious Dialogue

Mutual Understanding

Interreligious dialogue aims to enhance understanding and appreciation of diverse beliefs, values, and traditions. Through such dialogue, each party has the opportunity to learn about the teachings and perspectives of other religions, helping to reduce misunderstandings and prejudices. By recognizing the values and viewpoints of one another, a broader understanding of religious and belief diversity can be achieved, enabling individuals and groups to see differences as part of the cultural and spiritual richness of society (Nashihin and Dewi 2019:20).

Building Relationships

Interreligious dialogue contributes to building positive and harmonious relationships among religious communities, thereby creating a conducive atmosphere for peaceful coexistence. Through open and respectful interactions, religious groups can learn from one another, collaborate, and foster bonds based on trust and solidarity. Strong interreligious relationships provide a vital foundation for facing common social challenges and sustaining harmony in multicultural societies (Ahmad Suradi, Kenedi, and Surahman 2020:56).

Promoting Peace

One of the primary goals of interreligious dialogue is to promote peace and prevent conflicts arising from religious differences. By opening spaces for dialogue, communities can resolve differences peacefully and respectfully, thus reducing the potential for tensions caused by divergent beliefs. Interreligious dialogue not only helps to ease conflicts but also contributes significantly to the

pursuit of long-term peace. It allows societies to work together in building tolerant, safe, and harmonious environments for all.

Through mutual understanding, positive relationships, and the promotion of peace, interreligious dialogue becomes an effective means of bridging differences and fostering an inclusive society.

Best Practices for Promoting Inclusion and Tolerance

Education

Education that emphasizes inclusion and tolerance from an early age plays a crucial role in instilling values of respect and appreciation for differences. By introducing knowledge about cultural, religious, and worldview diversity in schools, children can learn to accept differences as natural and valuable. Such education also shapes a more open-minded generation that can coexist harmoniously within multicultural societies (Zubaidi and Java 2024:39).

Communication

Building open and honest communication among religious communities is an essential step toward reducing prejudice and enhancing understanding. Through open communication, people can share perspectives, listen to one another, and identify commonalities amidst differences. Effective communication helps dismantle stereotypes and fosters mutual trust. It also creates a platform for individuals to express their views respectfully, thus nurturing an inclusive and tolerant environment.

Collaboration

Interfaith collaboration in various areas such as social, economic, and cultural activities strengthens unity and solidarity within communities. By working together in community service, humanitarian aid, or development projects, individuals from different backgrounds can establish positive relationships. Such collaboration fosters bonds based on shared goals, encouraging communities to support one another and work collectively for the common good, regardless of religious or cultural differences (Ningsih and Rohman 2018:11).

Peace

Promoting peace and rejecting violence are fundamental in creating a conducive environment for coexistence in diversity. Peace enables societies to live together with a sense of safety and comfort, while minimizing the risk of conflict rooted in religious or cultural differences. Prioritizing peaceful conflict resolution and rejecting all forms of violence are essential steps toward encouraging tolerance and inclusion. By embracing peace as a shared value, societies can build harmonious communities where every individual feels accepted and respected.

Through education, communication, collaboration, and peacebuilding, these practices provide a strong foundation for shaping inclusive and tolerant societies where diversity is valued as an asset that enriches collective life.

Conclusion

In multicultural societies, fostering equality, tolerance, and inclusion is an essential effort in creating harmony amid religious and cultural diversity. Challenges such as discrimination, conflict, and extremism often hinder the achievement of equality in diverse contexts. However, by emphasizing principles of plurality, tolerance, and dialogue, societies can overcome existing differences

and find strength in diversity. Religion plays a vital role in shaping social dynamics through moral values, social structures, as well as identity and culture. To support harmonious interreligious relations, dialogue serves as an effective tool in fostering mutual understanding, building positive relationships, and promoting peace.

Efforts to establish inclusive and tolerant communities can be realized through education, communication, collaboration, and a commitment to peace. Early education that instills values of inclusion and tolerance will shape a more open generation that appreciates diversity. Honest communication, interreligious collaboration, and peace promotion serve as fundamental pillars for building respectful societies. Thus, through collective efforts, multicultural communities can become inclusive and tolerant spaces where every individual lives in peace and mutual respect.

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