

Conference Paper

Strengthening Religious Tolerance: The Practice of Harmony and Diversity of the Society of Ngargoyoso Village, Karanganyar, Central Java

Rohmatul Faizah^{1*}, Jihan Avie Yusrina²

¹Universitas Pembangunan Nasional “Veteran” Jawa Timur, Surabaya 60294, Indonesia

²Universitas Ivet Semarang, Semarang City, Central Java 50235, Indonesia

*Corresponding author:

E-mail:

rohmatulfaizah.ih@upnjatim.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research is encouraged by the rise of news about conflicts in the name of religion in Indonesia and as a response to the low tolerance attitude of Indonesian towards other religions' activities. Therefore, it is necessary to show the best practice of inter-religious harmony as a reference in fostering a harmonious inter-religious life and dismissing conflict issues that are reported louder than its tolerance. This best practice can be found in Ngargoyoso Village, Karanganyar, Central Java, a village with multi-religion: Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity, that can live in harmony. The ministry even elects Ngargoyoso as a tolerance-aware village. For this reason, this study will photograph the tolerance conditions in Ngargoyoso and reveal the implementation of tolerance and diversity in the surrounding society. These two questions will be answered by qualitative research with a case study approach. The results indicate that harmony in Ngargoyoso has existed since ancient times until now. People used to see the practice of tolerance from an early age. The harmonious attitude is based on full awareness by society so that the existing tolerance is active. The spirit of cooperation also melts into the society's soul so that they have a sense of love for each other without considering religious differences. The implementation of tolerance and diversity in this village is based on Pancasila values so that harmony and togetherness are created. The limitation of tolerances is only on social affairs and not on worship matters. Various efforts to maintain a well-established tolerance continue to be carried out, including assistance from outside parties and a tolerance festival.

Keywords: Harmony, tolerance, diversity, Ngargoyoso

Introduction

Harmony between religious communities is essential to create stability to achieve a united and peaceful Indonesian society. Harmony can be well established if religious adherents respect each other's differences, help each other, and can unite opinions. This practice is called the attitude of tolerance, which is an open behavior and respect for all existing differences (Safei, 2020).

Building religious harmony is not easy. It must be carried out with focus and caution because religion is a sensitive area that involves the emotional aspects of the people. Sometimes, some religious people focus on claiming the truth rather than seeking it. This condition must be alerted to maintain safe and peaceful religious life because it cannot be denied that religious reality in Indonesia is still far from ideal. The religious riots in Tolikora, Manokwari, Singkil, and other places show how true harmony and tolerance have not yet been realized. Within the scope of Islam, some groups still reject the existence of Shia, Ahmadiyah, and other minority groups (Mu'ti, 2019). This condition is supported by the research conducted by the Center for Data and Statistics of Education and Culture of the Secretariat General of the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2017, that tolerance between religions, especially tolerance for activities carried out by other

How to cite:

Faizah, R., & Yusrina, J. A. (2023). Strengthening religious tolerance: The practice of harmony and diversity of the society of Ngargoyoso Village, Karanganyar, Central Java. 7st International Seminar of Research Month 2022. NST Proceedings. pages 105-109. doi: 10.11594/ nstp.2023.3318

religions in Indonesia tends to be low, even dominated by less tolerant. It only reached a percentage of 57.6 percent (Hadi et al., 2017).

Although the reality about religion is still not ideal, the condition of harmony in Indonesia deserves to be used as a reference because the sense of tolerance between societies is quite good. It portrayed that as a country with a Muslim majority, Indonesia has the basis of Pancasila, not religion. In addition, Indonesia's index of religious harmony in 2019 was in a high category (61-80 = high) (Sila & Fakhruddin, 2020). Best practices related to religious harmony can be found in Ngargoyoso Village, Karanganyar, Central Java. A simple expression that describes this situation is "Peace and harmony in differences." Reporting from Republika.co.id, this village at the foot of Mount Lawu can be an example of a tolerant village in Indonesia because Muslims, Christians, and Hindus can live in harmony and peace. Uniquely, this village has three side-by-side places of worship, namely the Mosque of al-Mukmin, the Church of Sidang Jemaat Allah (GSJA) Pancaran Berkas, and the Temple of Agra Bhadra Darma. All three can carry out religious activities well and smoothly based on the principle of mutual respect and support. In social affairs, the surrounding community is very harmonious and prioritizes keeping in touch.

Based on this background, this study will attempt to describe a portrait of harmony in Ngargoyoso, and thoroughly explore how to maintain harmony based on plurality and diversity. This research focuses on the practice of harmony and diversity in the society of Ngargoyoso Village. At the same time, it also focuses on building a better, open, fair, and democratic future of internal and external relations between religious communities.

Material and Methods

This research on the harmony of society in Ngargoyoso Village, Karanganyar, Central Java, uses qualitative research, a procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior (Moleong, 2012). The type of this research included field research with a case study approach. Researchers will conduct direct research in Ngargoyoso Village to photograph the conditions of harmony and reveal the implementation of tolerance and diversity. This location was selected based on the election of Ngargoyoso Village as a harmonious village in 2019.

Following the research focus, the data in the study will be collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. The interview method obtains information directly from the source (Ali, 2011). This technique is used to find out the historical roots of harmony in Ngargoyoso and people's perceptions of the existence of differences in Ngargoyoso, as well as to reveal what factors encourage the creation of harmonious life. Several informants were involved in this process, including village officials, the head of the PKK, village elders, community leaders from various religions, and the village's youth. The data was also collected through observation to obtain data on the actual condition of religious harmony in Ngargoyoso, especially in the form of tolerance in the implementation of worship activities and religious rituals in three adjoining places of worship and the implementation of diversity in the village. Finally, data were collected using the documentation method to see evidence of religious harmony in Ngargoyoso and the assistance to foster religious harmony in the village. The collected data was then analyzed through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Emzir, 2012).

Results and Discussion

The portrait of religious harmony in Ngargoyoso

Ngargoyoso is a village located in the Ngargoyoso sub-district, Karanganyar district, Central Java. It consists of 7 hamlets, 14 community units (RW), and 51 neighborhood units (RT) with a population of 4,855 (BPS Kabupaten Karanganyar, 2021). Interestingly, in 2019, Ngargoyoso was selected as a harmonious village and was appointed as the pioneer of a peaceful village. It was marked by the declaration and signing of the inscription at the Ngargoyoso Village Hall in 2021. This award showed that the harmony in Ngargoyoso Village is perfect. People with various

religious backgrounds, such as Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity, can form integration to create a peaceful and prosperous life in harmony. There are even mosques, churches, and temples adjoining majestically and peacefully in the courtyard of the Ngargoyoso village hall.

The key to harmony is good communication and mutual respect for all citizens. The harmony we find today does not simply flow as it is amid society but is accompanied by high awareness of the existence of religious differences in Ngargoyoso. This awareness continues to be fostered so that the feeling of love as fellow human beings, brothers, and sisters is getting stronger. Of course, the emergence of awareness requires a process through knowledge, understanding, and experience (habituation) (Ghazali, 2013). This process has been instilled in the children of Ngargoyoso Village from an early age.

The existence of three places of worship in one location at the village hall of Ngargoyoso, which consists of the al-Mu'min Mosque, the Pancaran Berkas Assemblies of Allah Church, and the Agra Bhadra Darma Temple, shows that there is good communication and mutual respect between residents. This idea was initiated by the late Sri Hartono, who had been trusted to be the village head of Ngargoyoso for a long time. He is one of the figures who contributed to assisting religious harmony in the village. He animated the values of Pancasila so that people from various religions were very reluctant and supported his policies. He paid attention to religious people's voices and became an example of harmony. The idea of constructing the three worship places emerged to accommodate people according to their religion and to become a vehicle for absolute tolerance for society. Finally, the mosque building was built around 1980, then the church was around 1990, and the temple was around 2013.

Interfaith community interactions in Ngargoyoso Village are framed with the spirit of active tolerance. That is tolerance which involves oneself with others amid differences and diversity (Casram, 2016). In social life, people give the same attitude and treatment even to people with a different religion. They help each other and cooperate in various community activities without mentioning religious issues. This concept is instilled from an early age and passed down from generation to generation.

In Islam, the concept called *tasamuh* leads to an open attitude and willingness to admit the existence of differences. It is *fitrah* and *sunnatullah*, one that has become God's decree (Jamaruddin, 2016). From the perspective of Hinduism, this concept can be seen in the teachings of Tat Twam Asih, which emphasizes universal brotherhood for not hurting others. So people must love and cherish each other (Arifin, 2019). Meanwhile, the concept of harmony is also found in the teachings of Christianity. It is stated in the Declaration of the Second Vatican Council regarding the church's attitude towards other religions. It is based on the origin story of the apostle 17:26 as follows: "*All nations are one society and have one origin because God made all human races to inhabit all earth*" (Yudiana et al., 2017). The awareness to be tolerant in Ngargoyoso Village comes from obedience to each religion's teachings about tolerance.

Considering the three places of worship in the courtyard of Ngargoyoso, communication between religious leaders becomes essential because they are holy places to carry out their respective religious rituals. In this case, the community also understands that those places of worship are sacred, and only each believer can enter. People with different religions will stay only on the outer boundary of sacred areas. On several occasions, worship activities take place and are conducted at the same time. One day, there was an Eid al-Fitr prayer on Sunday, carried out the same as Sunday morning worship at the church. So, communication is necessary for finding solutions. Because with communication, there will be the best way and the loss of suspicion.

The Ngargoyoso society strongly believes that the religion they profess is the most authentic. However, on the other hand, they also have a responsibility to respect other religions. The simple reason is to understand each other's feelings as followers of a religion.

The implementation of tolerance and diversity

The well-established tolerance in Ngargoyoso Village, Karanganyar, Central Java, is indeed part of an earlier habit that is still lasting today. A pluralistic environment becomes an inseparable part of people's lives. From an early age, the Ngargoyoso societies have been accustomed to seeing and accepting differences.

The implementation of tolerance and diversity is based on appreciating Pancasila values that cause harmony and togetherness. The relations between religious adherents follow what has been regulated in the legislation. For example, there is no compulsion in religion. Every Ngargoyoso villager is free to worship according to their respective religions. In addition, there is no mission to spread religion in any form, neither persuasion, seduction, material giving, pamphlets distributions, nor home visits. Because apart from obeying the law, the public is also aware that freedom of faith is the right of every Indonesian citizen.

Ngargoyoso societies carry the values of nationalism so that harmony and togetherness are well-established. It positively impacts the growth of public awareness in various village activities such as cooperation, *siskamling*, village deliberations, and being active and contributing to social and village ceremonial activities. The local government continuously conveys these values to make the spirit of nationalism accompany the society's behavior. The local village government does not want to neglect to assist the community to stay in harmony. They believe harmony is a dynamic process that aligns with the community's growth.

The implementation of tolerance and diversity in Ngargoyoso also occurs through the acculturation of local wisdom values. Historically, inter-religious relations in Indonesia are based on tolerance that had been built for a long time. It even became a culture that was able to glue diversity into togetherness. Using the acculturation approach more often could form a pattern of relationships between diverse people who have been tolerant for centuries (Susetyo, 2017). For example, someone who gets blessings and happiness will hold a *syukuran* tradition by inviting neighbors without regard to religious background. It shows that tolerance in the village has already taken place by itself, guiding the society to face religious diversity. Furthermore, a tolerance festival is being held to increase the motivation and self-confidence of society as part of a tolerance-aware village. The theme used is local wisdom and caring for diversity.

The tolerance built in Ngargoyoso Village has certain limitations so that it does not lead to relativism. The villagers admit that they only tolerate social issues and do not touch the area of creed. They have never participated in other religious rituals or activities at places of worship of other religions. Participation is undoubtedly outside the area of worship. It is as Islam offers the principle of harmony between religious communities, which has been exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad through the Medina Charter. The charter states that relations between Muslims and other groups are based on good neighborly relations, helping each other in the face of enemies, defending those who are persecuted, advising each other, and respecting religious freedom (Susetyo, 2017). The Medina Charter is an exemplary attitude toward maintaining peace and harmony among religious communities.

So far, no obstacles have been encountered in implementing tolerance and community diversity in Ngargoyoso Village. One of the keys lies in a sound communication system between the government, community and religious leaders, and village residents, either youth or adults. Communication is also well established with external parties such as non-governmental organizations as a support system in maintaining harmony in Ngargoyoso.

Conclusion

The condition of inter-religious harmony in Ngargoyoso Village, Karanganyar, Central Java, has existed for a long time. Thus, the tolerance attitude that exists in society becomes a hereditary tradition. Nevertheless, various efforts were made to maintain harmony in the village. The portrait of inter-religious tolerance is excellent in various aspects of life and reflects an attitude of active tolerance imbued with the spirit of cooperation. The people in Ngargoyoso Village live well despite

their different beliefs. For example, the community is involved in every activity of people of other religions, especially when celebrating holidays. This beautiful harmony was accomplished due to a good understanding of the tolerance concept of all religions.

The implementation of tolerance and diversity in Ngargoyoso Village is based on internalizing the values of Pancasila so that harmony and togetherness are created. Relations between religious communities follow what is regulated by law. There is no mission to spread religion in any form in the village. Community development is also accompanied by local wisdom and religious values. Tolerance has limits only on the social realm and does not touch the realm of faith. In practice, there has never been an obstacle that has hindered the implementation of tolerance and diversity in Ngargoyoso Village. The communication pattern in the village is ideal and open between the government, religious leaders, and the community, as well as involving outside parties such as non-governmental organizations.

References

- Ali, M. (2011). *Memahami riset perilaku dan sosial*. Pustaka Cendekia Utama.
- Arifin, A. Z. (2019). Toleransi dalam agama hindu; Aplikasi ajaran dan praktiknya di Pura Jala Siddhi Amertha Sidoarjo. *Satya Widya: Jurnal Studi Agama*, 2(2), 71–92. <https://doi.org/10.33363/swjsa.v2i2.60>.
- Casram, C. (2016). Membangun sikap toleransi beragama dalam masyarakat plural. *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama Dan Sosial Budaya*, 1(2), 187–198. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jw.v1i2.588>
- Dja'far, A. B. (2019). Nilai-nilai humanisme dalam menjaga harmonisasi keragaman masyarakat. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional, Harmonisasi Keberagaman dan Kebangsaan bagi Generasi Milenial*. Lembaga Kajian Keagamaan14, 62–67.
- Emzir. (2012). *Analisis data : Analisis metodologi penelitian kualitatif*. Rajawali Press.
- Ghazali, A. M. (2013). Teologi kerukunan beragama dalam islam. *LisisAnalisis*, 13(2), 281–302.
- BPS Kabupaten Karanganyar. (2021). *Kecamatan Ngargoyoso Dalam Angka 2021*. Vol. 148. BPS Kabupaten Karanganyar.
- Hadi, D., Mohammad, D., Tiodora Hadumaon, Siagian Rahani, R., & Sukim. (2017). Analisis faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi sikap toleransi di Indonesia. In *Pusat Data dan Statistik Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (PDSPK) Kemdikbud*. Pusat Data dan Statistik Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (PDSPK) Kemdikbud.
- Jamaruddin, A. (2016). Membangun tasamuh keberagaman dalam perspektif islam. *Jurnal Toleransi: Media Komunikasi Umat Beragama*, 8(2), 170–187.
- Moleong, L. J. (2012). *Metode penelitian kualitatif*. PT Remaja Rosda Karya.
- Mu'ti, A. (2019). *Toleransi yang otentik*. al-Wasat Publishing House.
- Safei, A. A. (2020). *Sosiologi toleransi : Kontestasi, akomodasi, harmoni*. Deepublish.
- Sila, M. A., & Fakhruddin. (2020). Indeks kerukunan umat beragama 2019. In *Balai Penelitian dan Pengembangan Agama Makassar*. Vol. 19). Litbangdiklat Press.
- Susetyo, D. P. (2017). *Revitalisasi toleransi beragama berbasis kearifan lokal*. Penerbitan Universitas Katolik Soegijapranata, 1–157.
- Yudiana, I. K., Miskawi, & Pardi, I. W. (2017). Analisis kerukunan antar umat beragama pada masyarakat multikultur di ujung timur Pulau Jawa (Studi Kasus di desa Patoman, Blimbingsari, Banyuwangi, Jawa Timur). *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora*, 6(2), 147–158.