

Vol 1 No 3 2024
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC STUDIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
Email: internationalislamicsocial@gmail.com
Home Page:https://jurnal.asrypersadaquality.com/index.php/ijiss

RELIGION AND SOCIAL IDENTITY BUILDING COMMUNITY IN DIVERSITY

Ahmad Parwis Siregar

North Sumatra State Islamic University, Indonesia

ahmad1100000212@uinsu.ac.id

KEYWORDS
Social Identity, Community, Diversity, Social Solidarity

ARTICLE INFO
Accepted: 1 Sep 2024
Revised: 2 Nov 2024
Approved: 26 Dec 2024

ABSTRACT

Social and religious diversity in today's world demands the formation of inclusive and respectful communities. Religion plays a significant role in shaping the social identity of individuals and groups, and in building solidarity in pluralistic societies. This article explores how religion and social identity interact in the context of diversity, and how both play a role in strengthening communities. Using a social theory approach, this article discusses the influence of religion in shaping social norms, shared values, and creating spaces for dialogue between different groups.

INTRODUCTION

Diversity in modern society often poses challenges in maintaining harmony between different groups, whether in terms of religion, culture, or other social identities. However, diversity also provides opportunities for strengthening more inclusive and solid communities. Religion, as one of the main components in the formation of social identity, plays an important

role in creating strong social bonds between individuals and groups. In this context, religious identity is not only limited to individual beliefs, but also to the formation of shared norms and values in a pluralistic society.

Religion is often a central aspect in the formation of social identity, both at the individual and group levels. According to Smith (2019), religion provides a clear framework for individuals to understand themselves in relation to the larger community. Religious identity allows a person to feel connected to a group that shares the same values, beliefs, and practices. Religion also serves as a foundation for the creation of social norms that guide behavior and social interactions between individuals in society.

Furthermore, Durkheim (2005) emphasized that religion is a major pillar in creating social solidarity. In a pluralistic society, religion can serve as a bridge that strengthens social cohesion, especially when religion is used to build bridges between different groups. Religion is not only about the spiritual aspect, but also about how individuals and groups position themselves in society.

Religious diversity in a community is often a challenge in building harmonious relationships. However, from a social perspective, religion can function as a driving force to create space for dialogue and cooperation between different groups. Putnam (2000) shows that religious diversity does not have to be an obstacle to building social solidarity, as long as there is a joint effort to appreciate differences and find common values that can unite.

For example, interfaith dialogue programs run by communities around the world demonstrate that communication between religious groups can strengthen social bonds and create a deeper understanding of differences and similarities. Interfaith dialogue provides an opportunity for individuals to understand each other, share perspectives, and work together to address common challenges.

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research is a research approach that focuses on understanding social phenomena or human behavior through direct interaction with research subjects. The main goal

is to understand the meaning, perspective, and experience of the subject in the context of everyday life Sugiono (2018: 126)

Approaches in Data Analysis

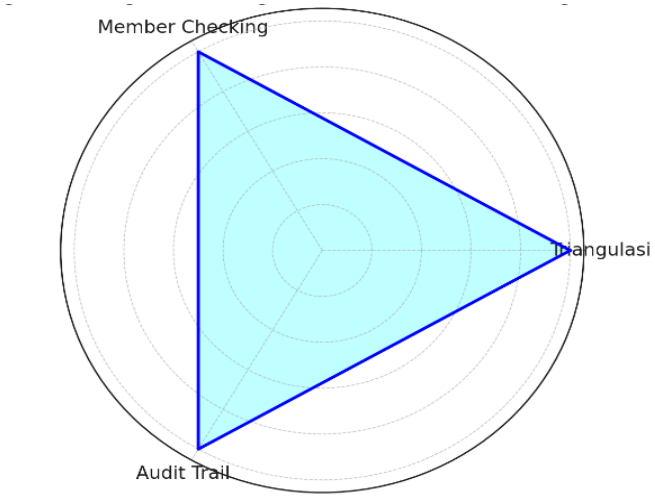
Qualitative data analysis generally does not involve statistical techniques, but instead focuses on identifying patterns, themes, and categories from the collected data. Some commonly used qualitative data analysis approaches include:

1. Thematic Analysis This approach involves identifying themes or patterns that emerge from the data. Researchers read and analyze the data, then categorize relevant information into specific themes.
2. Narrative Analysis This technique focuses on the narratives or stories told by research participants. Researchers seek to understand how individuals organize and tell their experiences.
3. Grounded Theory This approach seeks to develop theories or concepts that emerge directly from the data through an iterative and evolving coding process. This process involves determining categories, subcategories, and relationships between categories that emerge during the analysis.
4. Phenomenological Analysis This approach focuses on understanding the subjective experience of individuals. Researchers explore the meaning of experiences that are relevant to the phenomenon being studied, emphasizing deep understanding Sugiono (2018: 89)

Validity of Qualitative Data

Data validity in qualitative research is important to ensure that the research results are valid and reliable. Some techniques for testing data validity in qualitative research include:

a. Triangulation Using multiple data sources, methods, or researchers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied.
b. Member Checking Confirming findings with research participants to ensure that the researcher's interpretations match their experiences.
c. Audit Trail Compiling detailed records of the research process, including how data was collected and analyzed, to provide transparency.



Qualitative Data Validity Design

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The role of religion and social identity in building communities in diversity shows several important findings that can provide insight into how religion and social identity influence each other in creating social solidarity in pluralistic societies.

Religion as a Unifying Factor in Social Diversity

Research shows that religion plays an important role as a unifying tool in a pluralistic society. Although religious differences are often a source of conflict, religion can also be a meeting point that strengthens social bonds between individuals from different groups. Durkheim (2005) argued that religion provides a foundation for social solidarity by establishing norms and values that are mutually accepted by all members of society. The results of field research, for example in several large cities with multicultural populations, show that religious activities involving various religious groups (such as joint celebrations of religious holidays, or interfaith charity activities) serve as a bridge to reduce tensions between groups and build more cohesive communities.

Social Identity of Religion Strengthens Solidarity in Community

Religious identity not only serves as a means to identify individuals, but also as a mechanism to strengthen social solidarity within groups. Research results in multi-ethnic communities show that individuals who have a strong religious identity tend to be more involved in their social and community activities. Smith (2019) explains that religion provides structure and purpose in social life, which in turn forms collective values that encourage active participation in building community welfare.

Research also finds that religiously based social identities often serve as a means of creating a sense of belonging and mutual support. Certain religious groups that share common values, for example, in sharing social assistance, show higher levels of participation in joint social programs.

Challenges in Building a Community Based on Religion

Although religion can strengthen communities, research also shows significant challenges in building harmonious social relationships, especially in areas with high religious plurality. One challenge is religious exclusivism which can lead to social isolation between groups. Putnam (2000) shows that although religion can strengthen relationships within a group, exclusivism in religion often leads to social segregation between different groups.

The results of this study are reflected in cases in several areas experiencing tension between different religious groups, where religion is used as an identity that separates groups rather than integrating them. Therefore, it is important to emphasize the importance of understanding religion as something inclusive, which can be applied in interfaith dialogue and interaction.

Religion and social identity play a major role in building inclusive and harmonious communities, although there are challenges that need to be overcome, such as religious exclusivism and inter-group tensions. To build communities in diversity, it is important to prioritize the universal values taught by religion, such as tolerance, justice, and compassion. Through interfaith dialogue, tolerance education, and the use of social media and joint social programs, communities can create more cohesive and supportive communities.

DISCUSSION

Interfaith Dialogue

One of the most prominent practical applications of community building is through interfaith dialogue. These programs emphasize the importance of open communication between different religious groups to create a better understanding of each other's beliefs.

The application:

a. Interfaith Dialogue Forums in major cities bring together religious leaders, scholars, and community members from different religious backgrounds to talk about the similarities and differences that exist between them. This kind of dialogue helps break down stereotypes and create bridges between groups that are often separated by differences in belief.
b. The Interfaith School Program allows students from different religions to learn together and understand each other's religious values. This program not only promotes tolerance but also enriches students' knowledge about cultural and religious diversity.

The benefits of interfaith dialogue are creating a sense of mutual respect, reducing social tensions, and building more harmonious relationships between different groups.

Religion-Based Tolerance Education

In the context of education, many schools and universities are now integrating religious tolerance education into their curriculum. This education aims to foster understanding and acceptance of differences in religion and social identity, as well as the importance of shared values in diversity.

The application:

a. Religious Education and Tolerance class teaches students about the history, teachings, and practices of different religions. This class teaches how to see religion as a means to build peace and solidarity in diverse communities.

b. Joint projects between schools with different religious backgrounds to solve common social problems. For example, fundraising projects to help disadvantaged groups in society.

This education facilitates the younger generation in understanding the importance of living side by side peacefully despite differences in religion, ethnicity and culture.The practical applications of religion and social identity in building inclusive communities are diverse and can be applied in various contexts of community life. Through interfaith dialogue, tolerance education, joint social activities, social media, social development programs, and shared prayer spaces, religion can be a force that supports the creation of harmony in diversity. The formation of communities that respect differences and work together for common goals not only strengthens relationships between individuals, but also strengthens social bonds in the wider society.

Religion as a Force to Increase Tolerance

In increasingly pluralistic societies, religion can play a key role in fostering tolerance and mutual respect. Nussbaum (2011) argues that religion, while sometimes a source of conflict, can also be a source of peace if used in a way that promotes values of tolerance, justice, and respect for differences. By focusing on universal principles in religion, such as compassion, justice, and peace, religion can serve as a tool for building mutual respect between different groups. However, it is important to note that religion does not always function in this way. When religion is used to reinforce exclusive identities, it can increase tensions and conflicts between different groups. Therefore, it is important for religious communities to emphasize aspects that support social integration and unity.

CONCLUSION

Religion and social identity play a crucial role in building inclusive communities in a pluralistic society. By promoting universal values found in religion, communities can strengthen social solidarity and strengthen relationships between different groups. To achieve this goal, it is important to create spaces for interfaith dialogue and understanding, and to encourage practices that promote tolerance and mutual respect. Diversity, while often seen as

a challenge, can actually be a great strength in building more cohesive and harmonious communities.

REFERENCES

Durkheim, E. (2005). The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. Oxford University Press.

Nussbaum, M. (2011). The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming the Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age. Harvard University Press.

Putnam, R.D. (2000). Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community. Simon & Schuster.

Smith, J. Z. (2019). Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion. University of Chicago Press.

Giddens, A. (2009). Sociology (6th ed.). Polity Press.

Taylor, C. (2007). A Secular Age. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Casanova, J. (2011). The Secular and Secularisms. Social Research, 78(4), 1049-1076.

Huntington, S. P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. Simon & Schuster.

Bauman, Z. (2000). Liquid Modernity. Polity Press.

Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing Public Opinion in Competitive Democracies. American Political Science Review, 101(4), 637-655.