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THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN HANDLING SOCIAL CONFLICT: A CASE STUDY OF CONFLICT MEDIATION IN A RELIGIOUS-BASED COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the role of religion in resolving social conflicts in Indonesia, a country known for its cultural and religious diversity. Conflicts often stem from differences in beliefs and practices, which can lead to tension and misunderstandings. While religion has the potential to promote peace.The study emphasizes the importance of religious leaders in mediating conflicts, as they can foster dialogue and understanding among diverse communities. By promoting interfaith dialogue and multicultural education, communities can build bridges and reduce tensions. The integration of positive religious values into conflict resolution processes is essential for nurturing solidarity.In conclusion, this research provides valuable insights into how religious principles can be utilized to address social conflicts in Indonesia. By focusing on the constructive aspects of religion, communities can work together to cultivate a more peaceful.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a population that greatly respects the existence of God. In society, the influence of religion is felt deeply and strongly in various aspects of life. The beliefs and values inherited by religion shape individual behavior and regulate the order of life together in groups. Each religion strives to create peace, both in this world and in the hereafter. Religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which emphasize intellectual thought and have a formal structure, are often referred to as formal religions. Religion is related to beliefs and rituals that are carried out collectively by the community. Religion includes experiences that go beyond everyday reality, referring to 'transcends experience' or metaphysical aspects that are beyond the reach of ordinary humans. Therefore, since birth, a child will inherit the religion of his parents until he reaches a certain age that allows him to choose and practice religion independently, according to state law. Even from an early age, children are taught about religion through participation in religious activities (Derung et al., 2022).

Social conflict is a phenomenon that always arises in human interaction. In a diverse society, differences in beliefs, values, and cultures often trigger tensions that end in conflict (Yaqinah, 2019). In Indonesia, which is known as a multicultural country with various ethnicities, religions, and customs, social conflict is an important issue. Although various efforts to promote tolerance continue to be made, this problem is still far from a satisfactory solution (Purwanti & Idris, 2019).

History shows that inter-religious conflict is often a major challenge in building social harmony. In Indonesia, violent incidents involving religious communities, such as the riots in Ambon and Poso, show how vulnerable social stability is to internal and external influences related to religious identity. This creates collective trauma that is difficult to eliminate and worsens relations between groups (Rohmah, 2023).

According to St. Aisyah BM, conflict is not only in the form of physical violence, but also involves psychological aspects that can have a negative impact on society. Emotional tension due to conflict often continues into the next generation, creating a cycle of conflict that is difficult to break. Suspicion and hostility between groups can hinder efforts to restore harmonious relationships (BM, 2019).

Religion has a dual role in the dynamics of social conflict. On the one hand, religion provides strong moral values as a driver of peace and reconciliation. But on the other hand, misunderstandings in the interpretation of religion or its use as a political tool can worsen

tensions. Many cases show that the role of religious leaders is key in shaping narratives that can reconcile or, conversely, trigger conflict.

Despite various efforts to foster tolerance, such as multicultural education and interfaith dialogue, the reality on the ground shows that conflicts still occur frequently. This raises a fundamental question: why, despite strong efforts to promote tolerance, do conflicts continue to recur? There is an urgent need to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies that have been implemented and to seek new, more appropriate approaches.

Social conflicts in multicultural societies in Indonesia cannot be separated from the long history of interaction between cultures and religions. Conflicts often arise from misunderstandings related to religious beliefs and practices. The lack of dialogue between religions triggers stereotypes and prejudices that worsen the situation. Social and economic factors, such as economic injustice, social inequality, and discrimination, are often the main causes of clashes. In this context, religion can be a bridge to overcome problems, although a comprehensive and integrated approach is needed to better understand these dynamics (Sianipar et al., 2023).

This challenge is further complicated by the religious diversity in Indonesia. Pluralistic societies have various religions, such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism, with different values and norms. Therefore, it is important to analyze how these values can complement each other in the conflict resolution process.

Religious leaders play an important role in guiding people to appreciate differences and accept diversity. They have the potential to be a bridge in overcoming differences, although not all religious leaders are able or willing to play this role, depending on their background and views on conflict.

Social media also plays a role in creating or easing tensions between religious communities. While social media can spread inaccurate information, it can also be used for dialogue and tolerance campaigns. Using social media as a tool to spread messages of peace is becoming increasingly important in today's climate, where information can spread quickly.

Long-standing conflicts often create negative stigmas against certain groups, which hinder the reconciliation process. To achieve sustainable peace, it is important to overcome these stigmas through education and better understanding of religious values that support harmony. Constructive interfaith dialogue can change the negative narrative. Interfaith collaborative programs, such as dialogues, social projects, and community initiatives, have been shown to reduce tensions. Through collaboration, communities can find common solutions to the problems they face.

Research on the role of religion in conflict resolution is still very much needed. Although there are many studies, these studies often do not consider local perspectives. This study aims to provide new insights into how religious values can be applied in multicultural Indonesia, with recommendations that are more contextually relevant.

The challenges in applying religious values to conflict resolution must be recognized. Not all religious interpretations support peace. Therefore, it is important to find ways for religious leaders and communities to promote interpretations that promote harmony, given the diversity of interpretations.

Although social conflict is part of the dynamics of diverse societies, religion has great potential as a tool for resolution. With the right approach and a deep understanding of religious values, society can move towards a more peaceful and harmonious situation. This study aims to explore how this strategy can be applied effectively in various communities in Indonesia.

This study aims to analyze the role of religion in handling social conflicts, especially through mediation in religious-based communities. Another objective is to explore how religious values can be applied in the mediation process and the contribution of religious figures in resolving conflicts. Thus, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between religion and social conflict and offer constructive solutions.

METHOD

The method in this article uses library research, which is a method of collecting data by understanding and studying theories taken from various related literature to explore the role of religion in handling social conflict. The selection of this method provides space to explore various views and contexts from the literature that examines religion-based conflict mediation. The main objective of this study is to review various scientific works, articles, and documents related to social conflict and the role of religion in resolving it. This library study approach focuses on analyzing concepts and theories in related literature, without relying on empirical data from the field.

The main data sources in this study consist of secondary literature, including books, scientific journals, articles, and research reports related to social conflict, mediation processes, and the role of religion in the context. Data collection was carried out with systematic steps through searches in academic databases and libraries, using keywords such as "the role of religion in conflict mediation," "social conflict," and "religious-based communities" to find relevant literature. After the data was collected, each source was critically analyzed for quality and relevance in order to ensure credibility and support for the research objectives, and must be in-depth in order to support its propositions and ideas.

The data analysis process used a thematic approach, which involved reading and in-depth understanding of each selected literature. This step was continued by identifying key themes related to the role of religion in handling social conflicts, such as the motivation of religious leaders in mediation, religious values that encourage dialogue, and challenges faced in the mediation process. By connecting findings from various literatures, this study seeks to produce a comprehensive understanding of the contribution of religion to resolving social conflicts.

To increase the validity of the research results, triangulation was conducted by comparing information from various literature sources. This approach allows researchers to gain a more comprehensive view and reduce the potential for bias that may arise from a single source.

The results of this study are arranged in a systematic narrative form, revealing the main findings and their implications for the practice of religion-based conflict mediation. This study is expected to provide recommendations to stakeholders, including religious figures and social institutions, in strengthening the role of religion as an element of peace in a diverse society. In addition, this study is also expected to be a reference for further studies on social conflict and religion-based mediation in Indonesia and in other countries with similar conditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Religion has many functions that can have a positive impact on social behavior. Teresiana Noiman Derung explains that religion plays an educational, savior, peacemaker, social control, fostering solidarity, transformative, creative, and sublimate role. In this case, these functions enable individuals to feel noble values and behave positively in social interactions. In the process of conflict resolution, religion can function as a means of reconciliation. When society experiences division, religious teachings often invite individuals to return to basic values that prioritize peace and unity.(Derung et al., 2022).

As social beings, humans cannot avoid conflict. Ajeng Dwi Pratiwi stated that conflict is a social process involving differences of opinion, values, or interests between individuals or groups. In this context, conflict can be seen as a tool for change needed to achieve better social integration. Therefore, understanding the root causes of conflict and how religion can play a role in handling it is very important.(Pratiwi et al., 2022).

Mediation is a method used to resolve conflicts by involving a neutral third party. According to Abdul Halim Talli, the mediation process aims to help the disputing parties understand each other's views. In the context of religion, mediation can be carried out by religious figures or community leaders who have credibility in society. This is important to

create an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding between the parties involved in the conflict.(Talli, 2015).

Religious figures often play an important role in the process of mediating social conflicts. They can serve as mediators who help ease tensions and encourage dialogue between conflicting parties. By using religious teachings as a foundation, religious figures can provide a broader perspective and raise awareness of the importance of peace.(Sianipar et al., 2023). Religion also contributes to the integration of social values and norms in society. When society faces conflict, religious values can be used as a guideline to return to the right track. By integrating religious teachings into social life, individuals are expected to avoid detrimental actions and contribute to peace in society. This is very relevant in the context of religious-based conflict mediation.(Ruslan et al., 2024).

Indonesia as a country with religious diversity has its own challenges in dealing with social conflicts. In this case, the role of religion becomes very crucial. According to Ratna Dwi Anjani and Aceng Kosasih, the Islamic religious community, for example, has a responsibility to build tolerance and resolve religious conflicts in Indonesia. This shows that religion not only functions as a tool to strengthen group identity, but also as a mediator that prioritizes harmony between religious communities.(Anjani & Kosasih, 2024).

Community according to McMillan and Chavis is a group of members who believe that their needs will be met as long as they have a sense of belonging, are connected to each other, and are committed to being together. Community can also be defined as individuals or people with similar characteristics, such as geography, culture, ethnicity, religion, or equal socioeconomic status. Community can also be defined based on location, race, ethnicity, occupation, interest in an issue, or other similarities(Anjani & Kosasih, 2024)..

Religious community means a group of people or individuals who have similarities in the field of religion, in which there is a sense of belonging, one frequency or connected to each other, and committed to being together. A good community is built if its residents know what they can offer to their community, not the other way around. Because, a community is a 'container' where the contents are its residents. The Islamic community is a social group of Muslim individuals from various backgrounds who basically have the same goals and interests in spreading Islam. The benefits of a religious community include being a medium for disseminating accurate information about religion. In addition, a religious community can also be a place to establish good relations or relationships between members who are members of it. Then, with the existence of a religious community, it can also help in building a sense of tolerance between each other(Anjani & Kosasih, 2024).

Social conflicts in Indonesia are often triggered by differences in values, beliefs, and identities that are rooted in religious backgrounds. In this context, religion plays a significant role in mediating and resolving these conflicts. Three major case studies that illustrate the role of religion in handling social conflicts in Indonesia are the conflict between Muslims and Christians in Ambon, the problem of intolerance in Tolikara, and the Sampang riots. These three cases show how religious figures and communities can contribute to conflict resolution and rebuild interfaith relations.

The Ambon conflict that occurred from 1999 to 2002 is a striking example of social divisions triggered by religious differences. In this case, the conflict between Muslims and Christians resulted in many fatalities and damage to infrastructure. However, the role of religious leaders was very significant in easing tensions. Religious leaders from both sides held dialogues to create a peace agreement, as well as educating the community about the importance of tolerance and mutual respect. Through this mediation, the people of Ambon slowly began to rebuild trust in each other, and the prolonged conflict was successfully calmed down.(Latuheru et al., 2024).

In Tolikara, Papua, there was an incident of intolerance involving a ban on worship in a church by a certain group. This case sparked tensions between Christians and Muslims. Local religious figures, such as priests and pastors, played an active role in the mediation process, highlighting religious teachings that emphasize compassion and mutual respect. They held meetings to discuss the root of the problem and find a solution that was acceptable to both parties. Through this approach, the situation began to stabilize, and the community in Tolikara began to dialogue to avoid potential future conflicts.(Saprillah, 2017).

The riot case in Sampang, Madura, in 2012 is another example where the role of religion is very much needed in handling social conflict. The riot involved Sunni and Shia groups which had an impact on public security and order. In an effort to ease the tension, religious leaders took the initiative to hold an interfaith meeting, where they shared religious teachings that could be the basis for creating harmony. This dialogue not only demonstrated the commitment of religious leaders to peace, but also showed that society can collaborate to solve existing problems.(Humaedi, 2014).

Identity crises are often the trigger for conflict in society. When individuals feel their identity is threatened, defensive reactions can arise, often in the form of conflict.(Pasha et al., 2021). Religion can play a role in providing a strong identity for individuals, but it can also be a source of conflict if not managed properly. The transformative function of religion in conflict management cannot be ignored. Religion not only provides solutions to existing conflicts, but

also helps individuals and communities transform towards better conditions. By adopting religious values, individuals are expected to be able to change detrimental behavior into constructive actions. This function is very relevant in the context of prolonged conflict in society.(Irawan, 2022).

Interfaith dialogue is one way to prevent and resolve conflict. In this context, religion can be a bridge to build communication and mutual understanding between different groups. Dialogue based on religious values can help create a social climate conducive to peace. Religious education also plays an important role in shaping the social behavior of society. Through religious education, individuals are taught about the moral and ethical values that underlie good social interaction.

Discussion

Religion plays an important role in supporting positive social behavior, as expressed by Teresiana Noiman Derung. In dealing with conflict, religion has an educational and reconciling function, as well as instilling noble values that can strengthen social interaction between individuals. Religious teachings often emphasize the principles of humanity, mutual respect, and mutual cooperation. Therefore, in conflict situations, religion functions as a guide to return to fundamental values that uphold peace and unity, thus providing hope for the restoration of relationships that have been torn apart by conflict.

In social interaction, conflict is something that is inevitable. Ajeng Dwi Pratiwi argues that conflict can function as a tool to encourage better social change. Here, religion plays a significant role in understanding the root causes of conflict and providing a framework for constructive resolution. By understanding that conflict can be a means for social integration, it is hoped that individuals and groups will not see it as a barrier, but as an opportunity to improve and strengthen social relations.

The mediation process is essential in conflict resolution, especially when involving a neutral third party. Abdul Halim Talli explained that mediation aims to help disputing parties understand each other's perspectives. In the context of religion, religious figures or community leaders often play a major role in this process. With an approach that prioritizes religious values, they can build trust and create constructive dialogue. Therefore, faith-based mediation not only reduces tensions but also encourages the creation of more inclusive and sustainable resolutions.

Religious leaders often act as mediators in social conflicts and make a major contribution to problem solving. With their credibility, they are able to calm the atmosphere and facilitate open dialogue between the parties involved. Using religious teachings as a guide, religious

leaders can emphasize universal values that can be accepted by all parties. In their role as mediators, they not only focus on resolving conflicts, but also building deep understanding between different communities.

Integration of religious values in the conflict resolution process is very important. When society faces problems, religious values can be a guide to redirect individual actions in a more constructive direction. By integrating religious teachings into daily life, it is hoped that individuals can avoid negative behavior that is detrimental and contribute to the creation of peace. This is especially relevant in the context of religious-based conflict mediation, where religious teachings can help restore relationships and create harmony amid differences.

Indonesia, with its religious diversity, faces a major challenge in dealing with social conflicts. Here, the role of religion is vital, as stated by Ratna Dwi Anjani and Aceng Kosasih. Religious communities, especially Islam, bear a great responsibility in building tolerance and resolving conflicts related to religion. In this context, religion not only strengthens group identity but also functions as a mediator that encourages harmony between religious communities. This shows that harmonious social integration can be achieved through a religion-based approach.

According to McMillan and Chavis, strong communities are built through a sense of belonging among their members. In religious communities, this is especially important because healthy communities are those whose members understand what they can contribute to the common good. Religion plays a role in creating this sense of belonging, so that individuals feel bound to one another by a common purpose. Through religious communities, individuals can build closer relationships and the solidarity needed to deal with conflict.

Identity crisis is often a major factor that triggers conflict in society. When individuals feel their identity is threatened, a defensive response can emerge and trigger conflict. Religion can provide a solid identity for individuals, but it also has the potential to be a source of conflict if not managed properly. In this context, the transformative function of religion is very relevant, where religion not only offers solutions to conflicts that occur but also helps individuals transform towards a better direction by adopting positive values from its teachings.

Interfaith dialogue is an important strategy in preventing and resolving conflict. Religion here acts as a bridge that helps build constructive communication and understanding between different groups. Dialogue based on religious values can create a social atmosphere conducive to peace. Religious education plays an important role in shaping the social behavior of society. Through religious education, individuals are introduced to moral and ethical values that

underlie good social interaction. This shows that religious education is not just a transfer of knowledge, but also functions as a tool to prevent social conflict.

Interfaith dialogue in Ambon is a significant step in resolving the conflict. Through discussion forums held by religious figures, both parties can share views and understand each other's positions. This activity not only helps to ease tensions, but also opens up opportunities for collaboration in the social and economic fields. In this context, religion acts as a bridge connecting two groups that were previously separated by differences, proving that dialogue can be an effective tool in resolving conflicts.

Religious education also plays an important role in the Tolikara case. Religious figures organize educational and outreach programs to increase public understanding of the values of tolerance. With this approach, it is hoped that the community can see religious differences as wealth, not as a threat. This ongoing educational process contributes to creating a more harmonious environment and reducing the potential for future conflict.

Although the mediation has shown positive results, there are still challenges in managing the conflict in Sampang. One of the biggest challenges is the existence of deep-rooted stereotypes and prejudices between groups. To overcome this, religious leaders continue to strive to raise awareness about the importance of respecting differences. The community needs to understand that diversity is a strength, and conflicts can be resolved through peaceful means.

The role of the community in conflict resolution cannot be ignored. In Sampang, the community has begun to actively engage in dialogue with religious leaders. With this community involvement, it is hoped that the sense of ownership of the conflict resolution process will be stronger. This awareness encourages the community to participate in maintaining security and order, so that the potential for conflict can be reduced.

Through these three case studies, it is apparent that religion plays a central role in handling social conflicts in Indonesia. Religion is not only an identity, but also plays a role as a means of mediation and problem solving. The involvement of religious figures in dialogue and mediation shows that they can be significant agents of change in creating peace in society.

In the future, it is important to continue to strengthen the role of religion in dealing with social conflicts. Religious education that emphasizes the values of tolerance and interfaith dialogue needs to be strengthened at various levels. With good education, future generations are expected to be able to understand the importance of mutual respect, so that social conflicts due to religious differences can be minimized.

The government and social institutions should also support the initiatives of religious figures in conflict mediation. Public policies that promote interfaith dialogue and support

inclusive religious education programs will help create a harmonious society. With the right support, it is hoped that social conflicts in Indonesia can be managed well, and potential divisions can be avoided.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the role of religion in dealing with social conflict is very significant, especially in the context of mediation in a diverse society. The educational, peacemaking, and transformative functions of religion provide a strong framework for restoring relationships between individuals or groups in conflict. Through religious teachings, individuals are introduced to the values of humanity, respect for others, and mutual assistance, which are important foundations in creating a peaceful atmosphere. In this case, religious figures act as mediators who are able to promote dialogue and build trust between the parties involved in the conflict.

Religion-based mediation aims not only to ease tensions but also to build integration of social values that can promote long-term peace. Indonesia, with its religious diversity, requires an inclusive approach in resolving social conflicts. Through interfaith dialogue and efforts to build tolerance, it is hoped that society can see conflict not as a threat, but as an opportunity to strengthen solidarity and harmony in living together. Thus, the role of religion as a mediator and strengthener of social integration is key in building a peaceful and prosperous society.

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