

The Role of Schools in Promoting Religious Tolerance in Multicultural Communities in Basarang Sub-District, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: Conflict is an inevitable occurrence in multicultural societies due to the diverse ethnic differences and varying cultural and traditional norms. Schools are believed to play a crucial role in mitigating such conflicts. This study aims to examine the extent to which schools contribute to reducing conflicts in social life. The research was conducted in Basarang school, where the strategies employed by the school to address conflicts and promote tolerance in social and religious contexts were documented. The findings revealed that the school adopts several approaches, including: (1) Implementing consistent policies that provide equal educational opportunities for minority students; (2) Incorporating multicultural education, where teachers and the school community exemplify positive values; and (3) Collaborating with teachers, community members, and religious leaders to foster religious tolerance by respecting and embracing religious differences among the diverse ethnicities in Basarang. Consequently, the outcomes of this study can serve as valuable insights to minimize religious and social conflicts that commonly arise in communities, not only in the city of Basarang but also in other areas.

KEYWORDS: The Role of Schools, Religious Tolerance, and Multicultural Communities.

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1. Introduction

Indonesia, with its numerous islands and regions, boasts a rich cultural diversity. While there are commonalities among Indonesians, there are also notable differences that contribute to the country's multicultural nature (Takdir, 2018; Priyowidodo, 2019). Multiculturalism has long been a global concern due to its potential to generate conflicts (Rex & Singh, 2003; Singh, 2003). Multiculturalism encompasses various aspects, such as ethnic, cultural, racial, and identity

differences, leading to a multicultural society (Tiryakian, 2003; Ambarwangi, 2013; Wenden, 2003). Additionally, multiculturalism can arise from the movement of people between different regions through immigration (Tarumoto, 2003; Kaur, 2007). These differences, in turn, can contribute to conflicts (Radtke, 2003). Conflict, as a reflection of societal changes, manifests in various forms throughout society.

Conflict, as viewed from a sociological perspective, is closely tied to primordial factors. These factors include deeply ingrained childhood experiences, such as traditions, customs, beliefs, and other cultural elements (Baron et al., 2004). Such conflicts directly impact groups within every community they occur in (Levin & Levin, 1981). According to Yasmeen et al. (2020), communities characterized by cultural diversity are more susceptible to conflicts compared to other issues. The existence of diverse ethnicities within these communities contributes to the occurrence of conflicts. In many cases, conflicts rooted in ethnicity and aspirations for separation from the state have arisen in foreign countries (Medrano, 2002; Wolff, 2002). In Indonesia, this cultural diversity has also given rise to what is commonly known as communal conflicts.

Communal conflicts in Indonesia often stem from economic disparities within the community (Sujarwoto, 2017). Factors such as economic inequality, cultural diversity, and political tensions gradually surface in people's lives and eventually lead to conflicts. Notable examples of such conflicts in Indonesia include those that occurred in Sambas, Sampit, and Poso (Hedman, 2018; Stein & Harel-Shalev, 2019; Kivimäki, 2016; Bertrand, 2004). Many international researchers have studied the causes and consequences of conflicts in Indonesia and have explored potential solutions to prevent further loss of lives. Taking inspiration from these foreign institutions, the establishment of educational institutions, particularly schools, has been recognized as a means to provide solutions and prevent the escalation of conflicts.

Schools have a significant role in the field of education and are regarded as the second most important educational institutions after the family (Aslan & Hifza, 2020). One of the primary functions of schools is to instill values in students through a process known as internalization (Berger, 1967; Peter and Thomas L, 1991). Internalization involves the assimilation of positive values by children within the school environment, facilitated by teachers who serve as influential figures responsible for imparting knowledge, skills, and character development. Through their guidance, teachers play a crucial role in shaping the values and beliefs of students, contributing to their overall growth and development.

The teachings of moral values in schools have a profound impact on children, as stated by Thomas W. (1917). Schools play a crucial role in imparting values to children, as emphasized by Bianchi (1999). They believe that schools have the ability to instill positive values in children, particularly through multicultural education, given the diverse ethnicities present within school communities. Multicultural education is not only implemented for students but also for teachers, as they come from various ethnic backgrounds (Yılmaz, 2016). The purpose of multicultural education in schools is to raise students' awareness and understanding of different cultures (Sharma, 2005). Additionally, the presence of diverse ethnicities in schools, as demonstrated by Bamford (2015), helps students become more familiar and comfortable with cultural diversity.

In this context, the role of school education institutions is indeed crucial in addressing conflicts by promoting the development of students' morals. Multicultural education is also implemented in Indonesia, including at Basarang School, located in the Basarang District of Kuala Kapuas Regency in Central Kalimantan. Basarang is situated along a river and serves as a transportation route connecting various cities within the province, sub-district, and district.

According to the Basarang District Monograph of 2014, the largest village in Basarang is Tarung Manuah Village, covering an area of 45 km², which accounts for approximately 22% of the district's total area. Following that is Batuah Village, covering 39 km² or 18.93% of the district area. The narrowest villages are Lunuk Ramba, Tambun Raya, and Bungai Jaya, each with an area of 3 km² or 1.5% of the total area. The total population of Basarang is around 18,482 people. The district is home to diverse ethnicities, including Dayak, Javanese, Balinese, Batak, Banjar, Sundanese, Buginese, and Eastern immigrants from Flores (Basarang District Office, 2004). Regarding religious affiliation, the majority of people in Basarang practice Islam, with 15,207 individuals identifying as Muslims. However, there is also a significant non-Muslim population of 2,866 people, including Christians (549 people), Hindus (2,300 people), and 15 individuals practicing the Kaharingan religion (Basarang, 2004).

Education in Basarang encompasses a range of levels, beginning from kindergarten and progressing through elementary school, middle school, and high school. The district is home to a considerable number of educational institutions, including 27 kindergarten schools, 6 Islamic Basic Pre-Schools, 34 elementary schools, 7 junior high schools, and 4 high schools (Basarang District Office, 2004). These institutions provide educational opportunities for students at different stages of their academic journey, contributing to the overall educational landscape in Basarang.

In Basarang, both private and public school educational institutions are committed to teaching multicultural education, which is particularly important given the diverse ethnic composition of the region. Remarkably, Basarang has not experienced any conflicts between ethnic groups thus far. Building upon this foundation, the researcher aims to conduct a study focusing on the role of schools in Basarang in fostering religious and social tolerance among students, despite their diverse ethnic backgrounds. This research seeks to explore the strategies employed by schools in promoting understanding, respect, and acceptance of different religious beliefs and social norms, with the ultimate goal of enhancing harmony and cohesion within the Basarang community.

2. Research Methodology

In this study, a qualitative research method was employed to analyze the primary data (Creswell, 2009; Teddlie, C & Yu, F, 2007) gathered from schools in the Basarang District of Central Kalimantan. The selected schools for data collection included SDN 1 Bungai Jaya, SDN Tambun Jaya, SMPN 1 Basarang, and SMPN 2 Basarang. The data collection process involved the use of observation, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews conducted with the school's board of teachers and the principal. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain in-depth insights into the role of schools in promoting religious and social tolerance among students, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the experiences, perspectives, and practices within the school community.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the significant role of schools in fostering religious tolerance in Basarang, spanning various educational levels from kindergarten to high school. Basarang, being characterized by its heterogeneous ethnic composition, reflects the diversity among students attending schools in the sub-district. Consequently, each school in Basarang formulates policies that cater to students belonging to minority religions. While some schools

develop new policies to accommodate the needs of these students, others incorporate multicultural education as part of their teaching approach.

One crucial aspect emphasized in teaching multicultural education is the principle of equality in education provision. Schools in Basarang strive to ensure that students with minority religions are granted equal educational opportunities. To achieve this, schools prepare teachers who are well-versed in the religious beliefs and practices of these students, aligning their educational practices with the principles of multiculturalism (Song, S. 2010). This approach not only promotes religious tolerance but also facilitates a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students, irrespective of their religious backgrounds.

The efforts made by schools in Basarang to implement policies and practices promoting religious tolerance contribute to the overall harmony and understanding among students from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. These findings underscore the crucial role of schools in instilling values of acceptance, respect, and equality, thus fostering an environment conducive to peaceful coexistence and social cohesion within the Basarang community.

At Bungai Jaya Elementary School, where students from Christian and Hindu backgrounds attend, the principal recognizes the importance of accommodating their religious practices. The principal grants the students the authority to pursue their religious studies independently and allows them to attend Christian schools on Sundays. While respecting the students' individual religious practices, the school also places significant emphasis on promoting religious tolerance.

Schools play a crucial role in teaching and fostering tolerance among students, regardless of their religious backgrounds. By incorporating teachings of tolerance into their curriculum, schools contribute to the successful internalization of these values by students. The promotion of tolerance within the school environment helps students develop a deeper understanding and acceptance of different religious beliefs and practices.

In this context, the role of Bungai Jaya Elementary School in fostering religious tolerance is evident. By allowing students to pursue their religious studies and providing an atmosphere that encourages respect and acceptance, the school contributes to the development of a harmonious and inclusive community. The experiences and values gained through the school's approach to religious tolerance serve as a foundation for students to embrace diversity and coexist peacefully with individuals from different religious backgrounds.

The process of internalization, as advocated by Berger (1967) and Peter L. and Thomas L. (1991), is indeed a fundamental aspect of education where teachers strive to instill positive values in their students. The Basarang school demonstrates the successful internalization of these values through the observable behavior and attitudes of its students. One can witness the harmonious and cheerful demeanor of students as they leave and return from school, which serves as a testament to the positive values imparted within the school environment.

The findings of this study align with the research conducted by Bamford (2015), who emphasized the role of schools in fostering intimacy and religious tolerance. A noteworthy observation is the interaction between Muslim students wearing hijabs and their peers who do not. Despite their religious differences, these students maintain social relationships and demonstrate a sense of camaraderie. This exemplifies the inclusive and accepting atmosphere cultivated within the school, where students from diverse backgrounds can coexist harmoniously.

The behavior and interactions of the students at Basarang school further support the notion that schools play a crucial role in building student harmony and fostering a sense of tolerance. The positive values instilled within the students contribute to their ability to form

meaningful connections and embrace diversity. Through the successful internalization of these values, the Basarang school serves as an effective institution for promoting tolerance and fostering positive social relationships among its students.

Parti, a Muslimah teacher from the East Java Ponorogo ethnicity, emphasizes the crucial role played by teachers and the community in Basarang in maintaining religious harmony. She highlights several key aspects that contribute to this harmony.

Firstly, there is a foundation of mutual respect for each other's religions. This respect is demonstrated through social interactions and activities. Teachers and community members actively engage in social events such as attending marriage ceremonies, Christmas celebrations, Islamic festivals, and other non-Islamic festivals. This inclusivity allows for a deeper understanding and appreciation of different religious traditions and fosters a sense of unity among the diverse religious communities.

Secondly, there is a spirit of social cooperation among the teachers and community members. They collaborate on various projects and activities, pooling their resources and efforts to work towards common goals. This shared commitment to social cooperation transcends religious boundaries, creating a supportive and inclusive environment where everyone can contribute and thrive.

These practices and activities contribute to the overall religious harmony in Basarang. By actively engaging in social relationships and promoting mutual respect and cooperation, teachers and community members in Basarang play a significant role in nurturing an environment where religious differences are embraced and celebrated.

Another aspect highlighted by Parti is the respect shown towards the rituals of worship performed by different religions. In Basarang, there is a culture of tolerance where non-Muslim religions, for example, show understanding and acceptance when Muslim worshippers use loudspeakers for their religious practices. This mutual respect for each other's religious rituals contributes to the harmonious coexistence of different faiths within the community (Parti, 2016; Tarno, 2016; Suriyanto, 2016; Syahbana, 2016; Ketut, 2016).

Furthermore, the principal of the school plays a significant role in fostering relationships and maintaining a sense of intimacy among the teachers and parents. On occasions of religious celebrations, the principal encourages teachers to build friendships and nurture connections with one another. This emphasis on maintaining close relationships extends to the teachers' interactions with parents as well (Taufik, 2016). The harmonious relationships among the teachers, and between teachers and parents, create a positive and supportive environment that ultimately impacts the students (Becik, 2015). Through these interpersonal connections, teachers model tolerance and understanding, which influences students' attitudes and behaviors.

Overall, the combination of respecting religious rituals, fostering relationships, and maintaining intimacy among teachers and parents contributes to the promotion of religious tolerance within the Basarang community. These efforts by both teachers and school leaders create a positive educational environment where students learn the values of tolerance, acceptance, and harmony among diverse religious backgrounds.

Made Catre's observations further support the notion of religious harmony in Basarang Sub-district. The harmony is attributed to several factors. Firstly, teachers and students at schools in the area demonstrate mutual respect for one another. For instance, at SDN 1 Tambun Raya Basarang, there are teachers and students from various religious backgrounds. The school comprises 9 Muslim teachers, 3 Balinese teachers, and 1 Christian teacher. Despite the small

number of Christian students, the school ensures that they receive equal treatment and rights as students of Islamic faith. Christian teachers specifically teach the Christian student, emphasizing inclusivity and equal opportunity.

Secondly, the teachers from Bali and Java, who migrated to Basarang in 1962, share a special bond akin to that of brothers. This long-standing relationship between teachers from different ethnic backgrounds fosters a sense of camaraderie and mutual understanding. The shared experiences and history contribute to the overall atmosphere of religious harmony and cooperation in the community.

These instances exemplify how respect, equality, and a sense of fraternity among teachers and students of diverse religions have positively influenced religious harmony in Basarang Sub-district. The commitment to fostering an inclusive and accepting educational environment sets a strong foundation for promoting religious tolerance and understanding among the community members.

Furthermore, conflict resolution in Basarang Sub-district is typically achieved through open deliberation and dialogue, avoiding conflicts among community members. This approach allows for peaceful resolution of issues that may arise. Additionally, the Balinese ethnic group's tendency to be accommodating and quick to apologize plays a significant role in preventing conflicts from escalating further. The Basarang ethnic group as a whole fosters positive social relations, engaging in activities such as attending weddings and collaborating on mutual endeavors. These practices reinforce the sense of community and cooperation within Basarang.

The religious tolerance observed in Basarang schools is not limited to specific institutions but extends to other schools as well, such as SDN Bungai Jaya 2 located on Mawar Street in Basarang. The principles of mutual respect and respect for each other's religious activities are consistently upheld, creating an inclusive and harmonious environment for students of different faiths. The combination of these factors, including open dialogue, the Balinese ethnic group's conciliatory approach, the Basarang ethnic group's emphasis on positive social relations, and the overall practice of religious tolerance, contributes to the maintenance of religious harmony within Basarang Sub-district.

The inclusive nature of religious events is evident in Basarang schools, as exemplified by the commemoration of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad SAW. On this occasion, lecturers from STAI Kuala Kapuas were invited to participate, and the event was attended by teachers and students, regardless of their religious affiliation. This demonstrates the willingness of both Muslim and non-Muslim individuals to contribute to the success of events organized by the Muslim community. It is noteworthy that the support for such events extends beyond the school environment. The wider community and religious leaders, including those from Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity, also show their support for these initiatives. This collective support from various religious communities further strengthens the atmosphere of religious harmony and inclusivity in Basarang.

The active involvement of teachers, students, and the community at large in both Muslim and non-Muslim events fosters a sense of unity, understanding, and mutual respect among different religious groups in Basarang. These collaborative efforts contribute to the overall promotion of religious tolerance and harmony in the sub-district.

The religious tolerance observed in the Basarang community, characterized by strong bonds of intimacy and kinship, can be attributed to the principles of mutual respect and a willingness to avoid conflicts. This harmonious environment has been established and nurtured

over time, and it continues to thrive due to the efforts of the new millennial generation. These young individuals, who have grown up in modern educational environments such as schools and universities, are actively engaged in promoting peace and practicing good moral values. Several studies support the notion that educational institutions play a crucial role in fostering religious tolerance among different religious groups. They provide platforms for promoting understanding, dialogue, and mutual respect among students from diverse backgrounds. The emphasis on education and moral development in these institutions enables the younger generation to cultivate peaceful coexistence and respect for others' beliefs and practices.

By nurturing these values in educational settings, the Basarang community and similar communities can create an environment where religious tolerance flourishes. The promotion of religious tolerance through education is an essential step towards building a society that values diversity, fosters harmony, and embraces peaceful coexistence.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, religious tolerance in Basarang is not solely the responsibility of school education institutions but is a collaborative effort involving the community and religious leaders. The Basarang community demonstrates a strong commitment to religious harmony by actively supporting and participating in religious events and rituals of different faiths. When Muslims engage in their religious practices, teachers and students from other religions contribute by providing both material and non-material assistance. This reciprocal support extends to non-Muslim communities when they carry out their religious rituals. The spirit of mutual assistance and respect among different religious groups is a cornerstone of religious tolerance in Basarang, fostering a harmonious and inclusive community.

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