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## Handling Religious and Community Diversity to Prevent Exclusive Religious Expression in the Multireligious Community of Mojokerto, East Java, Indonesia

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### Abstract

This research addresses religious and community diversity to prevent exclusive religious expression in multireligious communities in Mojokerto, East Java, especially in Pohjejer Village. The village has a diverse social and religious background, with the majority of the population adhering to Islam, but there are also small groups of followers of other religions. The informants in this study consisted of 15 individuals selected purposively, including religious leaders, community leaders, members of religious organisations, and villagers involved in daily interfaith interactions. They were selected based on their central role in the social and religious dynamics of the village and their influence on the existing diversity. This study identifies factors that can trigger exclusive religious expression and provides insights into how interactions

between religious communities can be managed to minimise potential conflicts. The findings show that an inclusive approach, interfaith education, and interfaith dialogue are key to maintaining harmony. The new contribution of this study is an emphasis on the importance of a more holistic understanding of social interaction in the context of Indonesia's heterogeneous Islamic society, which can be an essential reference in Islamic studies related to the management of diversity in regions with similar characteristics.

Keywords: Religious Diversity, Exclusive Religious Expression, Multireligious Community

## A. Introduction

Religious diversity in Indonesia, especially in Mojokerto, East Java, is complex and dynamic. As a country with a majority Muslim population, Indonesia also has communities of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other local religions. This diversity, despite being a cultural asset, has the potential to cause conflict if not managed wisely. In this context, religious moderation is crucial to create harmony between religious people. Toha and Muna emphasised that Islamic moderation can serve as a unifier in religious pluralism in Indonesia, making diversity a valuable asset for the country<sup>1</sup>.

Madiyono and Haq also highlighted that religious diversity in Indonesia is both a gift and a challenge. They noted that although various approaches to interfaith dialogue have been carried out, misunderstandings between religious communities can still trigger conflicts<sup>2</sup>. Developing an inclusive and respectful approach to dialogue is essential in Mojokerto, where interactions between religious communities are frequent. Lestari added that religious

<sup>1</sup> Muchammad Toha and Faizul Muna, "Moderasi Islam Dan Aliran Pemikiran Pluralisme Agama," *Journal of Education and Religious Studies (Jers)* 2, no. 01 (2022): 22–28, doi:10.57060/jers.v2i01.36.

<sup>2</sup> Madiyono Madiyono and Mochamad Z Haq, "Open Integrity as a New Approach to Interfaith Dialogue in Strengthening Religious Moderation," *Open Integrity Peace and Interfaith Studies* 2, no. 1 (2023): 1–16, doi:10.59029/int.v2i1.11.



pluralism can be a source of division but can also be a unifier if there is mutual respect among religious believers<sup>3</sup>.

The phenomenon of exclusive religious expression has become an increasingly urgent issue, especially in the social and spiritual context. This expression is often characterised by an intolerant attitude that has the potential to trigger conflicts between communities. According to Muhaemin and Sanusi, religious intolerance is usually influenced by media framing that highlights differences and disputes, thereby worsening people's perceptions of other religious groups<sup>4</sup>.

The media also plays a vital role in shaping narratives that can strengthen or ease religious tensions. When the press emphasises more differences and conflicts, this can create a negative stigma against certain groups, worsening community relations. On the other hand, cultural festivals can be an effective means of overcoming intolerance by promoting the values of multiculturalism and pluralism. However, these efforts could be hampered if exclusive religious expression remains unchecked. Mahpudin also emphasised that elites often use identity politics to significantly reinforce exclusive and intolerant sentiments ahead of elections<sup>5</sup>.

In this context, exclusive religious expression can be used to mobilise political support, ultimately deteriorating community relations. However, challenges remain. Nasution reminded us that conservative understanding in Muslim societies can be an obstacle

<sup>3</sup> Julita Lestari, "RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN INDONESIA (Challenges and Opportunities for the Integrity of the Nation)," *Wahana Akademika Journal of Islamic and Social Studies* 6, no. 1 (2020): 1, doi:10.21580/wa.v6i1.4913.

<sup>4</sup> Muhaemin Latif and Erwin Hafid, "Multicultural Attitudes in an Islamic Boarding School of South Sulawesi-Indonesia," *Cogent Education* 8, no. 1 (2021), doi:10.1080/2331186X.2021.1968736.

<sup>5</sup> Mahpudin, "The Rise of Identity Politics in the Process of Democratization in Post-New Order Indonesia," *Sospol* 7, no. 2 (November 30, 2021): 148–60, doi:10.22219/sospol.v7i2.10781.

to religious moderation<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, it is essential to continue encouraging inclusive dialogue and education that values plurality, emphasising the Pancasila ideology as the basis for encouraging anti-extremist behaviour<sup>7</sup>. In Mojokerto, the very real diversity of religions requires an inclusive and dialogical approach to create a harmonious society. With the right approaches, such as religious moderation and multicultural education, communities can learn to coexist peacefully, respect differences, and build strong national integrity.

Preventing exclusive religious expression and creating peace between communities of different religions is a complex and multidimensional challenge. One of the main obstacles in this regard is the deep-rooted misunderstandings and stereotypes among other communities. Research shows that interfaith dialogue can be an effective tool to overcome this misunderstanding by prioritising tolerance communication involving all parties in the process<sup>8</sup>. For example, in Singkawang, the involvement of local governments in interfaith dialogue through the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) has proven effective in creating social harmony<sup>9</sup>.

In the face of religious diversity and exclusive expression in multireligious communities, various approaches have been implemented, including religious moderation. This approach serves to create harmony in a heterogeneous society. Previous research has shown that religious moderation can reduce tensions between religious groups by promoting the values of tolerance

<sup>6</sup>Solahuddin Nasution et al., "Analysis of Moderation Between Religious Communities in Tolerance in Simangumban Jae District, North Tapanuli Regency in 2021," *Wahana* 73, no. 2 (2022): 173–86, doi:10.36456/wahana.v73i2.5288.

<sup>7</sup>Nai M Tlonaen, "The Role of Pancasila Ideology in the Formation of Anti-Religious Extremist Behavior," *West Science Multidisciplinary Journal* 2, no. 12 (2023): 1040–50, doi:10.58812/jmws.v2i12.810.

<sup>8</sup>Elizabeth M Pope, "'This Is a Head, Hearts, and Hands Enterprise': Adult Learning in Interfaith Dialogue," *Adult Education Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2019): 205–22, doi:10.1177/0741713619888632.

<sup>9</sup>Srisudonosaliro Saliro, Marilang Marilang, and Herawati Herawati, "Tolerance Communication: Local Government Law, FKUB Dialogue Skills, and Social Harmonization in Singkawang City," *Social and Religious Communication Media Curiosity* 14, no. 1 (2021): 90–105, doi:10.35905/kur.v14i1.2079.

and mutual respect<sup>10</sup>. In Indonesia, known for its high religious diversity, religious moderation is considered an effective solution to overcome conflicts that often arise due to differences in beliefs<sup>11</sup>. In addition, inclusive education also plays an important role, where a curriculum that prioritises understanding of diversity can form an attitude of tolerance among the younger generation<sup>12</sup>.

An inclusive and tolerant approach to interfaith dialogue not only serves to reduce potential conflicts but also to build solidarity between different communities<sup>13</sup>. Initiatives such as “Pondok Damai”, promoted by the Pelita Interfaith Association in Indonesia, show how youth-focused programs can encourage interfaith cooperation and reduce the potential for intolerance<sup>14</sup>. By promoting the values of mutual respect and understanding, people can be better prepared to face the challenges that arise due to religious and cultural differences.

It is also important to realise that interfaith dialogue must be conducted with an approach sensitive to the local context and existing social dynamics. Research in Papua shows that dialogue initiatives involving local religious leaders can help reduce tensions and create a peace declaration that all parties recognise<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, an inclusive and tolerant approach to interreligious

<sup>10</sup> Mirzon Daheri et al., “Strengthening Religious Moderation: Learning from the Harmony of Multireligious People in Indonesia,” *Journal of Population and Social Studies* 31 (2023): 571–86, doi:10.25133/JPSSv312023.032.

<sup>11</sup> Siti Solikhati et al., “Religious Moderation and the Struggle for Identity Through New Media: Study of the Indonesian Ahmadiyya Congregation,” *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama Dan Lintas Budaya* 6, no. 2 (August 28, 2022): 195–210, doi:10.15575/rjsalb.v6i2.15058.

<sup>12</sup> Raihani, “Creating a Culture of Religious Tolerance in an Indonesian School,” *South East Asia Research* 22, no. 4 (December 19, 2014): 541–60, doi:10.5367/sear.2014.0234.

<sup>13</sup> None Constantinus, Andreas Lako, and Kristiana Haryanti, “The Effect of Environmental Intelligence, Local Wisdom and Pro-Environmental Behavior on Environmental Leadership Performance,” *Journal of Southwest Jiaotong University* 56, no. 6 (2021): 878–90, doi:10.35741/issn.0258-2724.56.6.77.

<sup>14</sup> Nasution et al., “Analysis of Moderation Between Religious Communities in Tolerance in Simangumban Jae District, North Tapanuli Regency in 2021.”

<sup>15</sup> Ridwan, “Examining Islamism, Peacebuilding, and Interfaith Dialogue in Papua, Indonesia,” *Societas Dei Jurnal Agama Dan Masyarakat* 11, no. 1 (2024): 24–38, doi:10.33550/sd.v11i1.397.

dialogue not only prevents exclusive religious expression, but also builds a strong foundation for creating peace and harmony between communities of different religions.

Previous research also emphasised that religious diversity in Indonesia requires an inclusive approach to create a harmonious society. For example, a study on applying religious tolerance in a pluralist society in Cigugur emphasises the importance of character education that teaches tolerance to build harmony between religious communities<sup>16</sup>. This approach aligns with the urgency of religious literacy, which can increase spiritual understanding and awareness among the younger generation so that they can contribute positively to a multicultural society<sup>17</sup>.

Previous studies have examined efforts to manage religious diversity in Indonesian society. Several proposed solutions, such as religious tolerance education, social interaction between religious communities, and inclusivity policies from the government, have shown significant results in creating social peace. For example, research by Nurhayati shows the importance of interreligious dialogue in preventing social tensions<sup>18</sup>. However, these solutions are often hit by limitations in practical implementation on the ground, especially in the context of small villages with traditions and cultures strongly tied to the religious identity of the majority.

In addition, existing research tends to be limited in exploring local factors that affect religious diversity in specific contexts, such as what happened in Pohjejer Village. Not all studies simultaneously integrate social, economic, and cultural dimensions in solving the

<sup>16</sup> Elisabeth Djuniasih and Aceng Kosasih, "The Application of Religious Tolerance Character in the Pluralistic Cigugur Community," *Journal of Character Education*, no. 1 (2019), doi:10.21831/jpk.v0i1.22987.

<sup>17</sup> M Yusuf Wibisono et al., "Religious: Journal of Religious Studies and Cross-Cultural Social Solutions for Majority-Minority Religious Contestation in Arjawinangun Cirebon, Indonesia," *Digilib.Uinsgd.Ac.Id*, accessed June 27, 2021, doi:10.15575/rjsalb.v5i1.10268.

<sup>18</sup> Zaitun Syahbudin et al., "Developing Students' Religious Moderation through Group Counseling at Islamic Higher Education," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 1 (2023): 15–28, doi:10.15575/jpi.v0i0.22977.

problem of religious diversity, which causes the solutions provided not to touch the deeper root of the problem.

However, despite efforts to promote tolerance, implementation on the ground still faces challenges. Many studies show that although awareness about religious moderation is increasing, practices on social media open up space for radicalisation and conflict between religious groups<sup>19</sup>. Therefore, a more effective strategy is needed to educate the public about the values of moderation and tolerance and strengthen religious leaders' role in creating dialogue between religious communities<sup>20</sup>. Many previous studies still have limitations, especially those focusing on theoretical aspects without providing practical solutions that can be implemented in local contexts, such as in Mojokerto. Some studies show that while religious diversity can support political cooperation, it has not been sufficiently explored in everyday practice in local communities. In addition, many studies do not consider local social and cultural factors, so the results may not be relevant to specific situations, such as the one in Mojokerto.

The methodology of this study uses a qualitative approach to deeply understand the phenomenon of religious diversity and exclusive expression in multireligious communities, especially in Mojokerto. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is more able to explore the perspectives and experiences of research subjects holistically and provide a deeper understanding of the social dynamics that occur in society.

This study uses a case study design, which allows researchers to research the phenomenon in the real-life context of a community. The data collection techniques include in-depth interviews,

<sup>19</sup> Theguh Saumantri, "Actualization of Religious Moderation in Social Media," *Moderatio* 3, no. 1 (2023): 64, doi:10.32332/moderatio.v3i1.6534.

<sup>20</sup> Herly J Lesilolo, "Transformational Leadership in the Reconstruction of the Role of Religion in Indonesia," *Journal of Foundation and Application Education Development* 1, no. 1 (2013), doi:10.21831/jppfa.v1i1.1053.

participatory observations, and documentation studies. In-depth interviews were conducted with various key informants, such as religious leaders, community leaders, community members, and other relevant parties, to understand their views on religious diversity and expression in society. The participatory observation was carried out to obtain data on social interaction and community behaviour in the context of religious diversity. Meanwhile, documentation studies collect data from relevant archives or reports that can provide more information about the region's history and development of religious diversity.

This study uses thematic analysis to analyse the data, where the researcher will identify patterns or themes that emerge from the collected data. This analysis aims to understand the factors that influence exclusive religious expression and religious moderation in these communities and to find practical solutions that can be applied in local contexts. In addition, this qualitative approach also allows researchers to conduct critical reflection on existing theories and develop a more contextual understanding of the phenomenon being studied. With this approach, the study's results are hoped to provide deeper and applicable insights into practical ways to manage religious diversity and reduce exclusive religious expression in multireligious communities, especially in Mojokerto.

This study aims to overcome these limitations by providing solutions that are more suitable for the local context. This research explores how religious moderation and education can be integrated to create a more inclusive and tolerant environment in Mojokerto. By understanding local dynamics and involving various stakeholders, this research is hoped to provide practical and applicable recommendations to reduce exclusive expression in multireligious communities.

The main contribution of this research lies in a holistic approach that combines religious moderation theory with inclusive educational practices. This research will add to the literature on

religious diversity in Indonesia and provide new insights into how policies and practices can be adapted to create a more harmonious society. Thus, it is hoped that the results of this study can be a valuable reference for policymakers and practitioners to prevent exclusive religious expression in multireligious communities.

## B. Discussion

The diversity of communities in Mojokerto, as a city rich in history and culture, reflects the religious and cultural plurality in the area. This diversity is a source of cultural wealth and challenges creating tolerance and harmony between religious communities. One of the phenomena that often arises in the context of this diversity is exclusive religious expression, which can cause tension between communities.

This phenomenon is often rooted in a less inclusive understanding of religious differences, which can increase intolerance.<sup>21</sup> Research on religious moderation shows that understanding religious differences as a gift from God can help reduce intolerance and promote harmony between religious communities<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, religious moderation must be taught and applied, especially among the younger generation, to build a tolerant character and respect differences<sup>23</sup>.

In this context, the role of the community is also vital in strengthening social and religious values. One is the role of communities such as Honda Club Indonesia, which is active in da'wah activities and community empowerment. This community

<sup>21</sup> Reza Adriantika Suntara et al., "Strengthening the Character of Religious Moderation for Generation Z at SMA Negeri 1 Puding Besar," *Jurnal ABDINUS: Journal of Nusantara* 8, no. 1 (April 7, 2024): 236–47, doi:10.29407/ja.v8i1.21983.

<sup>22</sup> Harun Y Natonis et al., "Socialization of Religious Moderation in Ta'aba Malacca Christian Junior High School," *Altifani Journal of Research and Community Service* 3, no. 1 (January 14, 2023): 106–13, doi:10.25008/altifani.v3i1.325.

<sup>23</sup> Agus Riyadi, "Religious Harmony: A Multicultural Da'wah Model to Build Peace in the Archipelago," *Mawa Izh Journal of Da'wah and Social Development of Humanity* 15, no. 1 (2024): 1–25, doi:10.32923/maw.v15i1.4321.

proves that social groups can be agents of positive change in promoting harmony and tolerance amid diversity. No less critical, local government policies also play a crucial role in supporting harmony between religious communities. Inclusive policies that support interfaith dialogue can create an environment conducive to diversity<sup>24</sup>. In this case, a study of implementing local government policies in Mojokerto is urgently needed to understand how these policies encourage harmony and reduce the potential for interreligious conflicts.

Through the involvement of various elements of society, including religious leaders and local communities, the Mojokerto local government creates programs that promote tolerance and mutual respect between religious communities. The diversity of communities in Mojokerto does bring challenges, but it also opens up opportunities to build a harmonious society. With a deep understanding of the role of religion in social life and the support of government policies that support harmony, it is hoped that the people of Mojokerto can live in harmony even though diversity is found as follows:

### 1. Awareness of Interreligious Tolerance is Formed Through Formal and Non-Formal Education.

Formal education that integrates the values of interfaith tolerance has proven effective in increasing students' awareness and understanding of diversity. In Mojokerto, implementing multicultural education programs in schools has reduced exclusive behaviour among students, creating a more inclusive environment. Research shows that dialogue-based education between religious communities

<sup>24</sup> Awaludin Pimay and Agus Riyadi, "Virtual Religious Conflict: From Cyberspace to Reality," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2023): 1–6, doi:10.4102/hts.v79i1.8639.



can build better communication and increase respect for the diversity of faiths<sup>25</sup>. With this approach, students learn about differences and how to appreciate and celebrate diversity<sup>26</sup>.

In addition, the application of *problem-based learning methods* in schools in the context of multicultural education with an independent curriculum also positively impacts students' understanding of ethnic, religious, racial, and inter-group diversity<sup>27</sup>. This method encourages students to actively engage in discussion and reflection, which in turn can reduce intolerance and exclusivity. Religious moderation-based education has also been identified as an effective solution to increase spiritual awareness and overcome the problem of social interaction due to exclusivity<sup>28</sup>.

Christian religious education, in particular, plays a vital role in building an attitude of tolerance among students in Christian schools. Through teacher examples and teaching emphasising human values, Christian religious education can help students overcome stereotypes and prejudices and apply tolerance values daily<sup>29</sup>. This shows that religious education not only serves to strengthen religious identity but also as a means to build a more peaceful and inclusive society<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Fredik M Boiliu, "Education of Christian Religious Education Values for Students in Building Religious Tolerance at SMP Negeri 20 Pamulang South Tangerang," *Journal of Science and Humanities Service* 3, no. 1 (2024): 69–80, doi:10.32938/jpsh.3.1.2024.69-80.

<sup>26</sup> Yanwar Prawono, "The Role of Christian Religious Education in Increasing Religious Tolerance Among Students," *Tevunah Journal of Christian Theology and Education* 2, no. 1 (2024): 49–62, doi:10.59361/tevunah.v2i1.19.

<sup>27</sup> Enok Wijenar, "Strengthening the Understanding of Diversity of Ethnicities, Religions, Races and Between Student Groups through Problem Based Learning," *Gema Wiralodra* 11, no. 1 (2020): 35–44, doi:10.31943/gemawiralodra.v11i1.111.

<sup>28</sup> Anis K Nafilah, "Implementation of Religious Moderation-Based Education in Increasing Religious Awareness in MAN 1 Pamekasan," *Journal of Education and Learning Dimensions* 11, no. 1 (2023): 31–43, doi:10.24269/dpp.v11i1.8005.

<sup>29</sup> Wiwik Setiyani, Masitah Effendi, and Sodik Okbaevich Yuldashov, "Internalization of Local Traditional Values in A Plurality Community: Interreligious Relations in Sawangan, Magelang," *Karsa: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture* 30, no. 2 (December 12, 2022): 233–65, doi:10.19105/karsa.v30i2.6582.

<sup>30</sup> Elsjani A Langi, Yonatan A Arifianto, and Saturnina Elisa, "The Role of Christian Religious Education on the Value of Tolerance," *Real Didache Journal of Christian Education* 3,

No less critical, character education prioritising religious tolerance has a central role in creating noble morals and tolerance attitudes. This character education is the principal capital in building harmony between religious communities in Indonesia<sup>31</sup>. Thus, formal education that integrates the values of tolerance and diversity is beneficial for individuals and society as a whole. Increasing awareness of interfaith tolerance through formal education in Mojokerto shows that an inclusive, dialogue-based approach is essential in creating a harmonious environment. Students can learn to appreciate differences through the right educational programs and contribute to creating a more peaceful society.

Community empowerment through non-formal education programs based on religious diversity in Mojokerto has significantly impacted the creation of harmonious interactions between religious groups. These programs open opportunities for the community to interact and share knowledge about differences in beliefs, ultimately reducing tensions between groups<sup>32</sup>. In this context, non-formal education is a bridge to build intercultural communication, which is essential in a multiethnic and multireligious society like Indonesia.

One practical approach in non-formal education is through intercultural dialogue. This approach can strengthen social harmony and reduce conflicts between groups. Research shows that programs that engage these dialogues can identify and address challenges such as stereotypes

no. 1 (2023): 63–73, doi:10.53547/rdj.v3i1.371.

<sup>31</sup> Sabar B Raharjo, "Character Education as an Effort to Create Noble Morals," *Journal of Education and Culture* 16, no. 3 (2010): 229–38, doi:10.24832/jpnk.v16i3.456.

<sup>32</sup> Yulia Fatimah, "Improving Social Harmony in the Development of Multiethnic Areas through an Intercultural Communication Approach," *Diksima* 2, no. 1 (2025): 10, doi:10.47134/diksima.v2i1.145.

and prejudices that often hinder social interaction<sup>33</sup>. By promoting inclusive and respectful values, these programs create a more peaceful and tolerant environment<sup>34</sup>.

In addition, peace education applied in this context also has a vital role in shaping people's understanding of human rights and social justice. Peace education teaches people to respect differences and understand the importance of harmony between religious communities. This aligns with efforts to build strong social cohesion amid existing diversity<sup>35</sup>. Thus, non-formal education increases knowledge and builds character and tolerant attitudes in the community.

The involvement of religious leaders and communities in the educational process has also proven to be important in the success of these programs. They act as facilitators who can direct discussions and interactions, creating a safe and comfortable atmosphere for all participants<sup>36</sup>. This approach allows people to not only learn about differences but also how to interact positively with people from different backgrounds. Thus, community empowerment through non-formal education programs based on religious diversity in Mojokerto has created a more inclusive and harmonious environment. Through dialogue, peace education, and active engagement from community leaders, these programs

<sup>33</sup> Hari Purwanto, "Analysis of the Role of Intelligence Mobilization in Preventing Conflicts of Disharmony between Religion and Local Culture," *Jppi (Indonesian Journal of Education Research)* 8, no. 1 (2022): 22, doi:10.29210/020221533.

<sup>34</sup> Kusnadi Kusnadi, "Peace Education: Strengthening Understanding of Human Rights and Social Justice," *Basicedu Journal* 8, no. 1 (2024): 539-51, doi:10.31004/basicedu.v8i1.7126.

<sup>35</sup> Ojang Kosasih, T Sutaryat, and Hanafiah Hanafiah, "Islamic Religious Higher Education and Social Cohesion in Indonesia," *Tsaqofah* 3, no. 2 (2023): 283-99, doi:10.58578/tsaqofah.v3i2.933.

<sup>36</sup> Nafita A N Hanifah, "Social Interaction Between Religious Communities in Kingking Village, Tuban," *Harmony* 22, no. 1 (2023): 187-207, doi:10.32488/harmoni.v1i22.604.

contribute to reducing tensions between religious groups and building a more tolerant society.

## 2. Multicultural Education and Local Leadership Attitudes

The multicultural education program implemented in Mojokerto has a significant impact on individuals and community leaders, including religious leaders and community leaders. This education provides the skills and understanding necessary to manage community differences with a more inclusive approach<sup>37</sup>. Research shows that leaders educated in multicultural contexts tend to be better able to create a harmonious environment and prevent the expression of interfaith intolerance<sup>38</sup>.

A critical aspect of multicultural education is the increased understanding and appreciation of differences. The program helps community leaders develop attitudes of tolerance and mutual respect, which are especially important in diverse societies<sup>39</sup>. By adopting inclusive values, leaders can more effectively address conflicts that may arise due to differences in beliefs and cultures. The findings also suggest that multicultural education can equip individuals with better cross-cultural communication skills, strengthening team cooperation and problem-solving.

<sup>37</sup> Rudianto Rudianto, "The Implementation of Multicultural Education in Shaping Student Character," *Indonesian Multidisciplinary Journal* 2, no. 6 (2023): 1360–66, doi:10.58344/jmi.v2i6.292.

<sup>38</sup> Ida A G Wulandari, "Multicultural Education for Students in Hindu Universities Towards Religious Moderation," *Japam (Journal of Religious Education)* 4, no. 01 (2024): 46–51, doi:10.25078/japam.v4i01.3258.

<sup>39</sup> Arifin Arifin, "Multicultural Education: Ideology of Learning and Teaching in Schools," *Borneo Humanities Journal* 4, no. 2 (2021): 96–102, doi:10.35334/borneo-humaniora.v4i2.2278.

Furthermore, multicultural education plays a role in shaping religious moderation attitudes among community leaders. Leaders with a good understanding of diversity tend to be better able to solve interfaith conflict problems<sup>40</sup>. As such, they serve as leaders and mediators who can mediate differences and create constructive dialogue between different groups.

Multicultural education also contributes to building the integrity of the nation. Through these programs, community leaders are taught to respect differences and work closely with different elements of society, which is crucial in the context of social and economic development<sup>41</sup>. Therefore, multicultural education improves individual attitudes and strengthens inclusive and responsive leadership to the needs of diverse societies.

Multicultural education programs in Mojokerto have proven effective in shaping a more inclusive and tolerant local leadership attitude. By equipping community leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to manage differences, this education contributes to creating a more harmonious and peaceful society.

The diversity of the community in Mojokerto reflects the cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity that exists in the region, and this diversity is seen not only as a difference but also as a potential for creating social harmony. In these diverse societies, exclusive religious expressions often emerge, where each group seeks to maintain their identity

<sup>40</sup> Fitrah Sugiarto, "Multicultural Education in the Perspective of Religions from the Perspective of Religions," *Isedu* 1, no. 1 (2023): 31–46, doi:10.59966/isedu.v1i1.307.

<sup>41</sup> Indah W Ningsih, Annisa Mayasari, and Uus Ruswandi, "The Concept of Multicultural Education in Indonesia," *Edumaspul - Journal of Education* 6, no. 1 (2022): 1083–91, doi:10.33487/edumaspul.v6i1.3391.

and beliefs. This phenomenon can raise tensions and open up opportunities for interfaith dialogue and understanding.

The role of religion in social life in Mojokerto is very significant, not only as a moral guide but also as a community binder in facing existing social challenges<sup>42</sup>. Local government policies that support interfaith harmony also play an essential role in creating an environment conducive to diversity. The government seeks to build a harmonious and respectful society through various programs that encourage interfaith dialogue and inclusive social activities<sup>43</sup>.

The dynamics of community diversity in Mojokerto reflect the complex interaction between religious expression, the role of religion in social life, and local government policies. Although challenges such as intolerance and exclusivity in religious expression remain, efforts to build interfaith harmony through dialogue and inclusive policies have shown positive results. Therefore, local governments and communities are responsible for continuing to promote the values of tolerance and mutual respect so that diversity can be a source of strength and not a divider. Thus, diversity in Mojokerto can be a model for other regions to create a harmonious and sustainable society.

Inclusive leadership refers to the ability of leaders to involve all members of a community, regardless of religious, ethnic, or cultural background, in decision-making processes and dialogue. Leaders who implement an inclusive approach tend to be more successful in building trust among community members, which is a key foundation for creating

<sup>42</sup> Ramot Peter, "Multicultural Education as a Means of Building the Integrity of the Nation," *Dialectics Journal of Literary and Cultural Language* 9, no. 2 (2022): 209–21, doi:10.33541/dia.v9i2.4502.

<sup>43</sup> Henri Shalahuddin, Fajrin Dzul Fadhlil, and Muhammad Sofian Hidayat, "Maps and Problems of the Concept of Religious Moderation in Indonesia," *Treatise : Journal of Islamic Education and Studies* 9, no. 2 (2023): 700–710.

social tolerance. When people feel heard and valued, they are more motivated to participate in constructive dialogue, which in turn can reduce tensions between groups.

Religious leaders are very important in shaping people's attitudes and behaviours. They can act as mediators in resolving conflicts between different religious groups by prioritising the values of harmony and mutual respect<sup>44</sup>. Religious leaders can create space for open dialogue, which is crucial in overcoming prejudices and stereotypes that are often a source of conflict.

On the other hand, administrative leaders also play a key role in creating policies that support interreligious harmony. Inclusive and equitable policies will create a safe environment for all groups to interact and collaborate. Therefore, collaboration between religious and administrative leaders is essential to strengthen social tolerance in Mojokerto.

### 3. Local Government Policies that Support Religious Harmony

Inter-religious harmony is essential in maintaining social stability and harmony in society, especially in Indonesia, which is known for its religious and cultural diversity. In this case, the role of local governments is crucial in creating an environment conducive to realising this harmony. The regional government of Mojokerto, as part of East Java, has shown significant commitment to formulating policies that support interfaith harmony. These policies focus on formal arrangements and include a range of initiatives to strengthen relations between religious communities.

<sup>44</sup> Stephanie T Solansky, Vipin Gupta, and Jifu Wang, "Ideal and Confucian Implicit Leadership Profiles in China," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 38, no. 2 (2017): 164-77, doi:10.1108/lodj-06-2015-0114.

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One of the policies taken by the Mojokerto local government is the provision of facilities for different religious celebrations. This support includes public facilities, places of worship, and public spaces that can be used for religious activities. The local government provides permits and logistical support for major religious events such as Christmas, Eid al-Fitr, and Vesak celebrations so that religious people can better celebrate their big days. With this support, a sense of mutual respect between religious communities is created, further strengthening social harmony.

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In addition, the Mojokerto local government is also active in organising diversity forums involving various elements of society, such as religious leaders, youth, and civil society organisations. These forums are a forum for discussion and dialogue between religious communities, a place to discuss tolerance, harmony, and differences openly. Through this activity, local governments strive to create better understanding among different communities and reduce the potential for conflicts that can arise due to misunderstandings.

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As a further step, the Mojokerto local government implements programs specifically designed to increase tolerance between religious communities. These programs include education on tolerance in schools, training youth on the importance of harmony, and public campaigns to educate the public about diversity. By involving the younger generation, it is hoped that the values of tolerance can be instilled from an early age to create a more inclusive and harmonious society in the future.

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The impact of the policies taken by the Mojokerto regional government on inter-religious harmony has proven to be positive. By providing facilities, diversity forums, and tolerance programs, the people of Mojokerto can



increasingly appreciate differences and coexist in harmony. Research shows that regions with inclusive policies tend to have lower levels of social conflict and higher levels of community satisfaction<sup>45</sup>. Therefore, the Mojokerto regional government's policy in supporting inter-religious harmony can be a strategic step that is beneficial to the local community and an example for other regions in Indonesia. By continuing to develop and strengthen this policy, it is hoped that interfaith harmony in Mojokerto can continue to be maintained and become a model for other regions facing diversity challenges.

Open dialogue between different religious groups is one of the most effective ways to build tolerance. Through conversation, individuals can understand each other's perspectives and experiences, which can reduce tension and increase mutual respect. Local leaders are essential in facilitating this dialogue by creating discussion forums, seminars, or community activities involving all religious groups<sup>46</sup>. Thus, leadership based on inclusivity and harmony plays a significant role in strengthening Mojokerto's social tolerance. Local leaders, both in spiritual and administrative capacities, are expected to play an active role in creating a space for open dialogue between different religious groups so that the people of Mojokerto can achieve better social harmony and reduce the potential for conflict due to differences in beliefs.

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<sup>45</sup> Adib Gunawan, "Actualization of Religious Tolerance Culture in Tangerang Nation Charisma School," *Journal of Faith and Spirituality* 3, no. 2 (2023): 341–54, doi:10.15575/jis.v3i2.28910.

<sup>46</sup> Fitri Mutmainnah and Panji Purnomo, "Analysis of Local Wisdom Values in Fostering Tolerance Towards Differences in Beliefs in Kayen Kidul District, Kediri Regency," *Koulutus 5 Journal*, no. 1 (2022): 117–34, doi:10.51158/koulutus.v5i1.821.

In building harmony in a society fragmented by religious diversity, the active role of local leaders is vital<sup>47</sup>. Regional leaders, both spiritual and administrative, are responsible for managing differences and pushing for policies that support peace<sup>48</sup>. They serve as bridges between different groups within society, with the ability to educate people about the importance of tolerance and mutual respect<sup>49</sup>. Multicultural education can be an effective tool in equipping leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to manage differences so that they can understand the values of inclusivity and harmony needed to create a harmonious society<sup>50</sup>.

In addition, policies taken by local leaders have a significant influence on creating harmony. Inclusive and equitable policies can help reduce tensions between religious groups<sup>51</sup>. For example, programs supporting interfaith dialogue and social activities involving different groups can strengthen community relationships<sup>52</sup>. Research shows that active participation in social activities can increase mutual trust and reduce prejudice among other groups.

Open dialogue between different religious groups is one of the most effective ways to build tolerance<sup>53</sup>. Local leaders

<sup>47</sup> Hayu Lusianawati et al., "Tracking the Impact of Local Wisdom in Sustainable Cultural Heritage Conservation: A Bibliometric Approach," *West Science Social and Humanities Studies* 1, no. 03 (September 28, 2023): 115–26, doi:10.58812/WSSHS.V1I03.251.

<sup>48</sup> Gunawan Widjaja, "Islam as Future Religion: What Western Community Say," *Al-Ulum* 21, no. 2 (2021): 406–23, doi:10.30603/au.v21i2.2281.

<sup>49</sup> Dedi Wahyudi, "Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies in Islamic Education Based on Religious Moderation," *Al-Istinbath: Journal of Islamic Law* 6, no. 1 (2021): 41.

<sup>50</sup> Sugeng Sugeng, "Religious Moderation in the Framework of Tolerance Between Religious Communities in Margorejo Village," *Journal of Buddhism and Science* 9, no. 1 (2023): 11–21, doi:10.53565/abip.v9i1.709.

<sup>51</sup> Shofiah Fitriani, "Diversity and Tolerance Between Religious Communities," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 20, no. 2 (2020): 179–92, doi:10.24042/ajsk.v20i2.5489.

<sup>52</sup> Dyah Listyarini et al., "Implementation of Pancasila and Citizenship Education Courses as an Effort to Build Tolerance in Students in Campus Life," *Integralistik* 34, no. 1 (2023): 1–6, doi:10.15294/integralistik.v34i1.40626.

<sup>53</sup> Fachruli I Rukmana, "Interreligious Dialogue from the Perspective of Sayid Qutub and the Role of the Government in Increasing Tolerance in Indonesia," *Setyaki Journal of Islamic Religious Studies* 1, no. 3 (2023): 37–49, doi:10.59966/setyaki.v1i3.458.

can facilitate this dialogue by creating discussion forums, seminars, or community activities that involve all religious groups. Through conversation, individuals can understand each other's perspectives and experiences, which in turn can reduce tension and increase mutual respect<sup>54</sup>. With an inclusive approach and open dialogue, local leaders can create a harmonious environment and reduce the potential for conflicts arising from differences in beliefs.

### C. Conclusion

This study shows that local leadership based on the values of inclusivity and harmony significantly impacts the creation of a framework that supports social tolerance in Mojokerto. These findings are consistent with existing literature, which emphasises the importance of the role of local leaders in mediating religious conflicts and accelerating positive social change.

Local leaders, both in religious and administrative capacities, serve as mediators capable of managing differences and creating space for open dialogue between different religious groups. Previous research has revealed that leaders with an inclusive approach can ease tensions between groups and improve social cooperation. In the context of Mojokerto, local leaders are expected to adopt strategies that encourage active participation from all elements of society to create a more harmonious environment.

Policies implemented by local leaders also play an essential role in building harmony. Inclusive and equitable policies can help reduce tensions between religious groups. Research shows that leaders who implement policies supporting interfaith dialogue

<sup>54</sup> Ahmad Tohri et al., "The Relevance of Integrated Social Sciences Learning Methods Based on Local Wisdom in the Era of Digital Society," *Journal of Teknodik*, 2022, doi:10.32550/teknodik.vi.951.

and social activities can strengthen community relationships. This indicates that local leaders in Mojokerto need to formulate policies that accommodate the interests of the majority group and provide space for minority groups to be involved in the decision-making process.

Open dialogue between different religious groups is one of the most effective ways to build tolerance. Local leaders can facilitate this dialogue by creating discussion forums, seminars, or community activities that involve all religious groups. Research shows that participation in such dialogues can increase mutual trust and reduce prejudice among different groups. Therefore, local leaders in Mojokerto need to play an active role in creating space for constructive dialogue.

Overall, the findings of this study are consistent with the literature suggesting that local leadership has a key role in mediating religious conflicts and creating inclusive frameworks. Local leaders in Mojokerto are expected to manage differences with an inclusive approach and encourage policies that support peace. Thus, it is hoped that the people of Mojokerto can achieve better social harmony and reduce the potential for conflicts that may arise due to differences in beliefs.

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