

Religious Development: the Role of Village Heads in Increasing Religious Moderation in Gongsol Village

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ABSTRACT

The crisis of religious tolerance in Indonesia is a serious concern for people today. Data shows a decline in the religious harmony index in the country, with issues of religious sensitivity becoming more frequent. This article discusses the important role of village heads in promoting harmony between diverse communities with a focus on the case in Gongsol Village, Karo Regency, North Sumatra. The Gongsol village head implements various programs such as cooperation and elderly gymnastics to strengthen social relations in the village, collaborates with security forces to maintain security, and involves residents in village decision-making. Apart from that, the village head respects the various religions in the village and tries to maintain a balance between religious communities. This article also reviews related literature and the research methodology used.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is currently experiencing a crisis of tolerance. Data shows that the religious harmony index in Indonesia is only 5.03 and this figure has decreased from the previous year's index (VOA Indonesia, 2023). The issue of religious sensitivity often occurs in Indonesia and is motivated by several factors such as disharmonization, intolerance, transnational culture, fanaticism, and so on.

In general, religious problems in Indonesia are triggered by the subjectivity of differences. In Taufani (2018), Gusdur pointed out that the many differences give rise to many perspectives so pluralism is vulnerable to sensitivity. Therefore, fixing religious problems must be done with a social and cultural approach, not religion itself.

The reality of social affairs in Indonesia has entered a critical phase where national media often report cases of intolerance. It is unfortunate if society still does not internalize social values in bringing out moderate attitudes. The existence of cases of intolerance closes social values that should be sacred. Although the government has initiated a religious moderation program, the above data indicates a lack of individual efforts from state leaders.

Ideally, as a nation that has been adhering to the motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" cases of intolerance can be optimally degraded. In Muhtadi (2019) heterogeneity is a necessity for the Indonesian nation. In maintaining the dynamics of heterogeneity, proportional religious moderation is needed. More deeply, the urgency of safeguarding social and human values must take precedence over religious fanaticism (Al-Mujtahid et al.,

2022). At this level, the role of competent leaders is needed so that sacred values in society can reappear and eliminate issues of intolerance.

The role of the leader is very important in religious moderation because the leader has a strong influence on society and can be an exemplary figure in promoting attitudes of tolerance, respect for differences, and interfaith cooperation. Through leadership focused on interfaith dialogue, education, and collaboration, leaders can help ease tensions, prevent conflict, and create an inclusive and harmonious environment for all faith communities.

A portrait of the success of leaders in implementing religious moderation in a heterogeneous society occurred in Karo Regency. The illustration of religious harmony in Karo Regency is very interesting to implement. The reason is, that the values of local wisdom and harmonization of a social nature are often implemented so that religious frictions in Karo Regency can be completely degraded. Recently, the Karo Regency government has been eager to bring up synergy between the community and the government to unite the community in a humanitarian node.

Presumably, the illustration that the author described above is interesting to analyze in depth. The author will make Gongsol Village in Karo Regency as a research instrument. This is substantial because the village is inhabited by a variety of people of different religions and ethnic backgrounds. However, so far there have been no social frictions that began with religious problems.

The urgency of this study is to review the harmonious heterogeneity in Gongsol Village. This situation certainly does not occur without cause, but there is a role for the village head in accommodating the interests of religious people. In this study, the resulting novelty will be an illustration that can be implemented on a national scale. The author reviews the leadership role of village heads in maintaining religious harmony with innovation diffusion theory and key opinion leader (Katz et al., 2017; Rogers, 1962)

Literature Review

This article substantively discusses the role of the village head in accommodating the interests of religious people in Gongsol Village. During the research process, the author collected several previous studies related to the substance of the discussion in this article. Previous research serves as an illustration for the author working on this research, some of which are:

First, a study on the prevention of inter-religious conflict based on community activities (Engkizar et al., 2022). The difference in research is in the context of the discussion where this article discusses the role of village heads in maintaining harmony and accommodating the interests of religious people in Gongsol Village. Previous research discussed the prevention of conflicts that are general with the community as an instrument of religious moderation.

Furthermore, a study on the role of the Bogor city government in strengthening religious tolerance (Sazali et al., 2015). The article from Sazali has several similarities in the discussion variables. Both articles discuss the role of leaders in strengthening religious tolerance. The fundamental difference in this study is the scale of the study. This research narrows the discussion study within the village scope.

The next piece of literature is research on religious moderation in the ideology of Pancasila (Islamy, 2022). Previous research discussed religious moderation in the formation of religious understanding among people in Indonesia according to the ideology of Pancasila. The difference between this article and previous research is that it specifically discusses the role of village heads in implementing religious moderation. While the previous article discussed the values of religious moderation in Pancasila normatively.

Then research that discusses the resolution of religious conflicts through Islamic values (Yanti & Witro, 2020). The difference lies in the substance of the study where this article discusses the role of village heads in implementing the values of religious moderation. This article explicitly does not discuss the implications of religious moderation with a review of studies that are religious, but rather social and cultural.

Finally, the research discusses the Medina charter as an instrument of religious moderation (Al-Mujtahid & Sazali, 2023). In previous research, the prophet Muhammad was able to implement the local wisdom of the city of Medina as a draft law that could be used as a force for religious moderation. The difference lies in the review of discussion where this research is empirical while previous research is normative.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article uses a qualitative type of method with a sociological-communicative approach (Grace, 2005). The data collection techniques used in this study were interviews, observation, and documentation (Creswell, 2014). Data sources in this study are primary data and secondary data. The primary data used in this article is the result of data collection through interviews with Gongsol Village officials, Gongsol Village religious leaders, and the community. The secondary data used are scientific articles, books, and reports that support research data.

The research location of this article is in Gongsol Village, Merdeka District, Karo Regency, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. The data results will be analyzed using content analysis techniques. According to Krippendorff (2022) Content analysis does not limit the text in the definition to the product of writing, but also "other meaningful matter" with deep context.

According to Moleong (1998), content analysis aims to optimize procedures to serve as a valid conclusion. Furthermore, Holsi in Moeloeng defines it as any technique used to conclude efforts to find the characteristics of the message and carried out objectively and systematically (Weber, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As the head of Gongsol Village will carry out a work program that can improve community harmony in gongsol village we always carry out cooperation activities involving all people in gongsol village and there are even activities every Sunday, namely elderly gymnastics. This activity can strengthen community relations in Gongsol village. In the next activity, I will cooperate with the security forces to ensure security in Gongsol village so that there is no crime in this village.

In addition, I will encourage the active participation of citizens in village policy-making. Involving the community in the decision-making process can strengthen the sense of belonging to the village and increase harmony.

The head of Gongsol Village will also accommodate religious interests by respecting every religion in Gongsol Village. The village head will also try to maintain the balance of religious people in this village by ensuring the facilities of the ibadah place in Gongsol village.

In realizing inter-religious harmony there is one thing that needs to be done, namely understanding the existence of other religions, to achieve a comprehensive understanding of other religions, a broad attitude is needed in attitude and action, and a chesty attitude in religious life will give a good meaning.

Some components of religious tolerance are: not forcing others to adhere to a particular religion, not denouncing/insulting other religions for any reason; and not prohibiting or interfering with people of other religions to worship according to their religion/belief.

CONCLUSION

In this result and discussion, it can be concluded that the village head Gongsol has a crucial role in promoting community harmony in the village. Through programs such as gotong royong and elderly gymnastics, the village head has succeeded in strengthening social bonds between residents, creating a harmonious environment, and increasing a sense of solidarity in the community. In addition, cooperation with security forces to maintain security in villages is an important step in preventing potential conflicts and crimes. The village head also actively involves residents in village policy-making, ensuring that the opinions and interests of all levels of society are respected, which in turn strengthens the sense of belonging to the village and inter-religious harmony.

In addition, the village chief Gongsol showed commitment to accommodating religious interests by respecting all religions in the village. This is important in maintaining balance and harmony between religious communities. Furthermore, the village head put forward a generous attitude toward religion, which gives a positive meaning to realizing inter-religious harmony. Components of religious tolerance, such as not imposing a particular religion, not denouncing or insulting other religions, and not interfering with the worship of people of other religions, are emphasized as important principles in building true religious harmony. Overall, the Gongsol village chief set a positive example in maintaining religious harmony at the village level, which could serve as inspiration for similar efforts elsewhere.

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