RECONSTRUCTING TOLERANCE IN EVERYDAY LIFE FOR YOUNG MUSLIMS TOWARDS INTERRELIGIOUS HARMONY

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Abstract

The level of tolerance towards non-Muslims among young Muslims today is concerning. It is because their views on religious differences have the potential to cause religious conflict. One of the studies shows that the campus as an educational institution has yet to construct conditions of religious tolerance intensively. This article examines the social construction of views on religious tolerance among educated Muslim youths using social construction analysis by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman. The study results show that their intolerant views of non-Muslims are influenced by their social media, films, schoolteachers, community, and relationships. Most are worried and afraid that their faith (*aqidah*) will be interfered with or accused if they visit houses of worship of other religions. Some think that the visit is forbidden (*haram*). After the dialectical process of subjective, symbolic, and objective reality through FGDs, discussions with adherents of other religions, visits to churches, and others, they have a new understanding of religious moderation. Thus, the reconstruction effort strengthens inter-religious harmony in everyday life.

Keywords: *Tolerance, Young Muslims, Social Construction, Interreligious Harmony.*

Introduction

At the end of 2020, the research results of the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta attracted public attention. This research shows that campuses as educational institutions need to construct conditions of religious tolerance optimally. Research on tolerance among lecturers and students was carried out simultaneously in 34 provinces throughout Indonesia using a survey method. One out of three students has a tolerance level that can be categorized as low or very low.[1] The respondents were 2,866 students and 673 lecturers across 79 tertiary institutions.[2]

Tolerance occurs from a constructive perspective toward the existence of other religious groups. This perspective in society will give birth to a harmonious atmosphere of life in society. However, because only some have the same insight into inter-religious relations, perspectives often emerge that can create socio-religious conflicts. One perspective that has the potential to cause religious conflict is religious attitudes and understanding, which assume that the only true religion is one's religion.

The religious perspective must be addressed for its influence on the practice of harmony in the life of religious people. In religious moderation, for example, tolerance is one of the four indicators of moderate behavior in religion. Tolerance is an attitude to respect and not interrupting the rights of others to have beliefs and express their beliefs. Thus, tolerance refers to an open-minded and receptive attitude, readiness to dialogue, and experience interacting with adherents of other religions.[3]

Conceptually and operationally, the definition of tolerance used in this study is respect for people of different religions. It is based on tolerant behavior, which requires an open attitude to interact with adherents of other religions, including respecting the symbols of other religions. Such behavior can be explained sociologically as human action is influenced by the system of meaning it has.[4] So the issue of religious tolerance can also be attained in the system of meaning used by individuals.

Many studies on the construction of religious tolerance have been car

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[1] Aloysius Budi Kurniawan (ed.), "Mahasiswa Indonesia Mempunyai Toleransi Beragama yang Tinggi," *Kompas.id,* March 2, 2020, https://www.kompas.id/baca/dikbud/2021/03/02/mahasiswa-indonesia-mempunyai-toleransi-beragama-yang-tinggi.

[2] Yusuf Wibisono et al. *Persepsi dan Praktik Toleransi Beragama di Kalangan Mahasiswa Muslim dan non-Muslim* (Bandung: UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2022), 3.

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[3] Kementerian Agama RI. *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Balitbang Diklat, 2019), 43-44.

[4] George Ritzer, *Sosiologi Ilmu Pengetahuan Berparadigma Ganda* (Depok: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2013), 39.

ried out before. One is Wayan Wirata's research entitled Reconstruction of Tolerance of Religious Moderation through Strengthening Local Wisdom in North Kuripan Village, Kuripan District. This research departs from three main problems: how to reconstruct tolerance in religious moderation, causative factors, and implications. The results showed that the forms of reconstruction of tolerance in moderation of religion through strengthening local wisdom in North Kuripan Village, Kuripan District, were gathering (simakrama), mutual assistance and cooperation, holding religious ceremonies, and assistance from religious institutions. The factors that influence the construction of moderation are historical, human, religious, cultural, and educational factors. Meanwhile, the implications of the reconstruction of tolerance in religious moderation are the impact of togetherness toward kinship, peace, and unity.[5]

Another research is Ahmad Suhendra's research entitled Construction of Religious Moderation of the Kalipasir Community in Tangerang: A Model of Islamic and Confucian Harmony. This study aims to analyze the construction of religious moderation in Kalipasir as an alternative map of religious harmony in forming religious moderation in Indonesia. With a social construction approach, this study looks at the moderation of religion in social systems. The study results show that maintaining religious moderation requires an open-minded attitude and shared awareness of diversity and that all religions teach peace and harmony.[6]

Meanwhile Moch. Choirul Arif examines religious tolerance in the construction framing of Surabaya Journalists. This study intends to describe the meaning and construction process carried out by journalists in Surabaya on cases of religious tolerance. The study results that religious tolerance is interpreted as accepting differences in others in belief or religion. Then there are two construction realities of reporting on religious tolerance carried out by Surabaya journalists: the existing and evaluative realities. The frame of peace journalism in the news of religious tolerance is constructed through the choice of sources and the use of words, sentences, and images with a positive impact.[7]

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[5] I Wayan Wirata, "Rekonstruksi Toleransi Moderasi Beragama melalui Penguatan Kearifan Lokal di Desa Kuripan Utara Kecamatan Kuripan," *Jayapangus Press: Jurnal Penelitian Agama Hindu,* Special Issue: Pendidikan dan Pendidikan (2022): 65-77, https://jayapangus-press.penerbit.org/index.php/JPAH/article/view/2161.

[6] Ahmad Suhendra, "Konstruksi Moderasi Beragama Masyarakat Kalipasir Tangerang: Model Kerukunan Beragama Islam dan Konghucu," *Jurnal Smart: Studi Masyarakat, Religi, dan Tradisi* 8, no. 1 (2022): 83-96, DOI: 10. 18784/smart.v8i1.1563.

[7] Moch. Choirul Arif, "Toleransi Umat Beragama dalam Bingkai Konstruksi Wartawan

Several fundamental issues distinguish this research from the previous studies. In addition to differences in the subject and locus of research, the main difference is the subject matter under study. This study aims to reconstruct an understanding of religious tolerance among educated Muslim youths by holding Focus Group Discussions (FGD), interacting directly with non-Muslims, and visiting non-Muslim places of worship (churches).

This research was stimulated by the statements of some students who were afraid and worried that their faith would not be accused; it was forbidden (*haram*) to visit a non-Muslim house of worship among educated Muslim youths on the campus, UIN KHAS Jember. Such a view does not just appear without any accompanying causes, and this social reality does not occur without a cause. It did not just happen.

It is a social construction that has been internalized into the space of consciousness and transformed into an objective reality. Thus, this research aims to reconstruct the tolerance of educated young Muslims in everyday life to create inter-religious harmony.

One of the four indicators (pillars) of religious moderation is tolerance. The rest is a commitment to nationality,

non-violence, and accommodation to local culture. Tolerance is the most crucial foundation in democracy because a democratic system will work if supported by individuals who can respect differences. So tolerance can be a tool to measure the maturity of a nation's democracy. The higher the tolerance for differences, the better the quality of democracy.[8]

However, construction is the result of a process. Tolerance also cannot be produced from an instant process. It is true to say that tolerance is the result of social interaction in society. Nevertheless, in the space of social interaction in society, individuals (including young people) gain understanding and learn many things, including tolerance. The process functions as input, not output. As input in the interaction process, tolerance becomes a social value. The individual learns this value from the surrounding environment. Learning this value is then referred to as the internalization of values into a person.[9]

This tolerant attitude can be seen in their willingness to cooperate with other parties who are not the same as him.

Surabaya," *Jurnal Komunikasi Islam* 6, no 2 (December 2016): 20-42, DOI: 10.15642/jki.2016.6.2.20-43.

[8] Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Balitbang Diklat, 2019), 44.

[9] Moh. Sya'roni Hasan, "Internalisasi Nilai Toleransi Beragama di Desa Jarak Kecamatan Wonosalam Kabupaten Jombang," *Dar al-Ilmi: Jurnal Studi Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 1 (April 2019): 101, DOI: 10.52166/dar%20el-ilmi.v6i1.1469.

Be it religion, race, ethnicity, thoughts, or other substantial things. The ability to establish cooperation in the student environment, for example, can be obtained by students while studying on campus because the campus is a place where many differences can be brought together. The campus has indirectly taught students to be willing and able to respect the existing differences. The heterogeneous face of campus life reflects heterogeneous life in society.[10]

Perceptions and tolerant attitudes of students while studying on campus are not affected by what disciplines are being studied. The most significant factor that triggers the birth of tolerance is the breadth of knowledge and depth of view. It is an essential capital in efforts to foster tolerance among young Muslims.[11]

Al-Munawar explained that there are two types of tolerance: static and dynamic.[12] Both types of tolerance have

a point of difference that is quite significant. Static tolerance, for example, is a "cold" tolerance. Tolerance only plays in the realm of discourse and theory. This type of tolerance is incapable of producing cooperative activities. While the second type of tolerance is dynamic. This tolerance is more active. This tolerance has a great opportunity to collaborate with various parties for the common good. Because of its active nature, this dynamic tolerance is able to create religious harmony. This is the kind of tolerance that young Muslims should have.

As described above, this research examines young Muslims' tolerance construction in everyday life. This research lasted for two months (November-December 2022) using the social construction analysis of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman.

This study examined the subject of tolerance in 116 students, three classes from the Islamic Communication and Broadcasting Study Program (KPI) of the Da'wah Faculty of Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq State Islamic University (UIN KHAS) Jember, East Java. They are young Muslims aged 20-22 years. They are fifth-semester students taking a Sociology of Religion course and have learned about inter-religious harmony. Thus, they can be categorized as educated Muslim youths.

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[10] Yogi Nugraha, "Karakter Toleransi Beragama dalam Sudut Pandang Generasi Millenial," *Jurnal Moral Kemasyarakatan* 4, no. 2 (2019): 74. DOI: 10.21067/jmk.v4i2.3856.

[11] Feryani Umi Rosidah, "Mengukur Tingkat Toleransi Pemuda Muslim di Kota Surabaya," *Religio: Jurnal Studi Agama-agama* 9, no. 1 (2019): 97-110, http://repository.uinsa.ac.id/id/eprint/115.

[12] Nopian Gustari et al., "Konstruksi Penanaman Nilai Toleransi dalam Menangkal Radikalisme di Pondok Pesantren Provinsi Bengkulu," *Nuansa: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Sosial dan Keagamaan Islam* 18, no. 1 (January-June 2021): 29-46, DOI: 10.19105/nuansa.v18i1.4150.

Construction of Tolerance among Young Muslims

This social construction theory refers to the constructivist paradigm, which believes that reality results from social construction created by autonomous individuals. Individuals become determinants in a social space constructed based on their will.[13]

The first basic assumption of social construction theory is that reality results from human creation through the power of social construction around it. Because humans have the freedom to determine their behavior, they can escape from the shackles of social structures and institutions. Therefore, individuals are considered actors of social reality in the space of social interaction. The second basic assumption is that the relationship between human thought and its social context always experiences development which eventually becomes institutionalized. At the same time, the third basic assumption is that the reality of people's lives is continuously constructed and reproduced in such a way.

This reality in social construction theory consists of three kinds: subjective reality, symbolic reality, and objective reality. Subjective reality is interpreted as the construction of the definition of reality that belongs to individuals obtained through social processes. Symbolic reality is all symbolic expressions of what is lived as objective reality. The objectives are routine actions, including ideology and beliefs, and well-established patterned behavior that individuals have massively internalized as social facts.

This social process is dialectical with three construction stages: externalization, objectivation, and internalization. Externalization is an effort to continuously adapt humans to their social world, both physically and psychologically. Objectivation is social interaction in an intersubjective world that has been institutionalized or has experienced institutionalization. Internalization is identifying himself amid social institutions in which the individual is a member. In this internalization process, the individual absorbs his social reality into the structure of subjective consciousness.[14]

Reconstruction of Tolerance among Young Muslims

Consequently, tolerance or intolerance is the awareness of young Muslim individuals who have experienced the three stages of social construction (externalization, objectivation, and internalization). So, to find out the subjective reality of students regarding this tolerance, the authors conducted a survey

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[13] Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckman, *Tafsir Sosial atas Kenyataan* (Jakarta: LP3S, 1990).

[14] Peter L. Berger, *Langit Suci: Agama Sebagai Realitas Sosial* (Jakarta: LP3S, 1991), 4-5.

and Focus Group Discussion (FGD), with the main topic being visiting non-Muslim places of worship (churches) in each class at almost the same place and time.[15] The results show that out of one hundred and sixteen (116) students, one hundred and two (102) students attend church for the first time. The remaining fourteen (14) people had visited the church before. Those who have joined this church are generally due to social or organizational activities.

Of the one hundred and two (102) students who had never attended church, twenty-eight (28) students felt afraid, anxious, worried, indecisive, and had other similar feelings, which indicated that they were reluctant or unwilling to visit a church. This feeling arises because they think visiting a church will affect their faith or belief. Some even think it is forbidden (*haram*) to enter the church. Their assumptions are acknowledged to come from their association, social media speakers, films, and their school teachers. It shows that these fears and worries initially resulted from information and knowledge that had been internalized as a subjective reality. Then this reality is believed to be an objective reality that governs their way of thinking and behavior.

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[15] Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with Students of the Islamic Broadcasting and Communication Study Program (KPI), Faculty of Dakwah UIN KHAS Jember, Nov. 21, 2022.

Dialectics with Differences

The student's subjective reality is then reconciled with other symbolic and objective realities through discussion forums and visits to non-Muslim places of worship. The existence of meetings with adherents of other religions shows that another reality has yet to be known. In this case, the group discussions on inter-religious harmony and visits to non-Muslim places of worship attempt to reconstruct an understanding of religious tolerance among educated youth to create inter-religious harmony.

This process aims to form a cognitive understanding (internalization) for students that religious tolerance is no longer a choice but an obligation in a multi-religious society like Indonesia. This obligation does not belong to any religious institution or organization but is the duty of every individual. Because with tolerance, each religious community can live in peace and respect each other's adherents of other religions.

Then, as a follow-up to the FGD, in the fourth week of November 2022, researchers held an intense discussion on the topic of Inter-Religious Harmony. This discussion is carried out in class effectively. After the FGD and discussion, the researcher interviewed the Head of the Jember Regency Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB), Dr. H Abdul Muis M.Ag. In addition to bridging researchers with church officials, this

interview also provides essential information related to the portrait of interreligious harmony, especially among young people.

Furthermore, on Wednesday, December 7, 2022, researchers and KPI students visited the Jawi Wetan Christian Church (GKJW) at Karimata Street no. 27 Jember. Sometime before that, the researcher again asked via Google Form about what students felt before coming to the church. Twenty-three out of twenty-eight students continued to think as before. Then after going to church and having a casual chat with church officials about interreligious harmony.

As soon as students were asked to enter the church from the main door, the researchers carefully observed body language, facial expressions, and other physical expressions. After passing through the entrance, while heading for the seats prepared, many students cast their eyes in all directions. Most of them immediately looked to the front (west), where a prominent cross symbol was displayed. Others saw the dark brown ceiling of the church. A small number of students also went straight to their seats. It was quiet, only the sound of whispers among the students. It seems they hesitate to enter the church.

Pastor Soni who greeted us enthusiastically then invited the students to take pictures first. The situation changed

so soon. Many of them got up from their seats to take photos. Their expressions of joy had already begun to appear. Their voices also began to be heard loudly.

After allowing them to take pictures, the visiting forum then began. Pastor Soni immediately introduced some of the church officials present. After the introduction, it was followed by an explanation of the history of the establishment of the Jawi Wetan Christian Church (GKJW) and the history of the establishment of the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB), as well as the role of FKUB in Jember Regency. In the end, Pastor Soni allowed discussing. Three students actively asked questions, two boys and one girl.

Just before the event ended, the researcher asked again via Google form about their feelings, impressions, and responses after being in the church. From these results, according to the researchers, cognitive knowledge is not enough to construct their understanding of tolerance. There needs to be real action to make them feel the impact of tolerance so it does not just understand the meaning of tolerance.

New Construction of Social Reality

There is an important point to note here. After visiting the church and interacting with the priest, it turned out that there were no more students who felt scared and worried. They consciously

say that entering a church is not what one might think. Before entering the church, they already have a negative perception of the church.

Therefore, visits to non-Muslim houses of worship and discussion forums have been able to change their previous stance. It has also given birth to a new perception of the church. This new understanding will slowly transform into a subjective, symbolic, and objective reality. In addition, they also become aware of the importance of religious tolerance in Indonesian society, which is multi-ethnic and religious; maintaining harmony and mutual respect for differences is a noble human value both in religion and in society.

Conclusion

This research has proven that the fear and worry about their beliefs when they come to the church comes from information that is not true and is already believed to be the truth. This truth needs to be dismantled and reconstructed to strengthen a new understanding that is more accommodating to non-Muslims.

As a result, efforts to reconstruct tolerance in everyday life for young Muslims are carried out through a dialectical process of externalization, objectification, and internalization. It shows the importance of open-mindedness and the need for experiences to interact intensely with others.

There is already a practice of religious tolerance that can be used as a tangible example by young Muslims. The tradition of the Multipurpose Ansor Front (Banser) troops in guarding the church at Christmas celebrations since 1996 is a clear example of this. The tradition initiated by KH. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur)[16] is a national legacy that should continue to be reproduced and constructed by young Muslims to create inter-religious harmony

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