Pluralism in Religious Life in Indonesia: Tolerance in Gorontalo and Manado Regions

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ABSTRACT: This paper concentrates on religious life in two regions, namely Manado and Gorontalo. In this paper, it is found that plural life is very tolerant among religious people as evidenced by the lack of religious conflicts, both in Muslim-majority areas in Gorontalo and Muslim minorities in Manado. The problem in this paper is how the religious process takes place and is lived by the Muslim minority community in Manado, and how the Muslim majority community interacts with non-Muslim minority groups in Gorontalo, as well as how the differences between these two environments survive in a harmonious interfaith environment. To analyze the problem, qualitative analysis is used with observational data collection methods, interviews, and documents. Research findings show that religious life in Manado and Gorontalo as pluralist areas seems tolerant, but the tolerance is pseudo. This is because most people in both regions choose to live in the same settlement with followers of the same religion and do not mingle with different religions.

KEYWORDS: Religious, Pluralism, Tolerance

A. INTRODUCTION

Suicide and several blasphemy cases in Indonesia today have given a special view to the meaning of tolerance in Indonesia. Religious moderation, which is a flagship program, is an effort made by the Ministry of Religious Affairs to give the meaning of peace in Indonesia's plural country.

As a nation with a plural society, there is often friction due to differences in views on religion. This is what can disturb the harmonious and peaceful atmosphere in Indonesia. The suicide bombing incident in Makassar in March 2021 occurred at a time when Indonesia and the rest of the world were experiencing the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. The incident of a lecture by a convert lecturer at a private university in Jakarta who gave a bad assessment of his previous religion in 2019 went viral in 2021 and there are many more incidents of friction in religion that even reached court hearings.

Feeling that the truth is only a religion that is adopted and judging other religions as untrue, is the dogma that exists in religious people. The majority of Muslims who live in a shared environment tend to be exclusive in accepting differences, while minority Muslims are more inclusive in accepting differences. Religious treatment creates an exclusive and inclusive community, although it depends on one's understanding of the religion he adheres to, but the habit of living together with different communities will greatly affect the understanding of religion for the laity.

Living in a shared environment with differences can create religious moderation in Indonesia. The functions of religion in community life include: Functioning educatively, as a savior, as peace, as social control, fostering a sense of solidarity, and transformative, creative, and sublimation (Mulyadi, 2019.) So far, Muslim communities living in minority environments tend to be more inclusive of differences. While those who live in a Muslim-majority environment tend to be exclusive towards differences.

This paper is intended to reveal interfaith religion in harmony by analyzing how to live in those who are in Muslim minorities and Muslim majorities in Gorontalo and Manado areas. This paper is based on the author's argument that the quantity factor of religious believers in a social environment has a direct influence on the inequality of thinking of religious people in interfaith community harmony.

The Muslim majority tends to show an exclusive Islam. The majority of Muslims are less able to accept differences, considering only Islam safe and other teachings to be heretical. Intolerance and mutual understanding are difficult to create. The public sphere will be misguided because the dominant ideology dominates, so there will be no pluralist society. When the dominant attitude occurs in the majority society while Indonesia is born from the beginning as a pluralist society, there will be no mutual understanding or mutually tolerant society. The barrier is that attitudes in unhealthy sources of public space are the presence of several attitudes such as prejudice, ethnocentrism, stereotype, and discrimination.

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B. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a field research focused on two regions, namely Gorontalo and Manado whose communities are majority and minority Muslims. These two areas represent the existence of society in an interfaith environment. Gorontalo is a Muslim-majority area while Manado is a Muslim minority area. Data collection in this study used documentation techniques and community interviews in both areas. Of course, not all societies, but will take samples of some communities. This study examines the extent to which religious plural attitudes in communities living together with differences and diverse attitudes of people living in the majority of Muslim religions accept differences with minority non-Muslim communities.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Indonesia as a Plural Country

Indonesia cannot be united in one view because this country from the beginning of its formation has a variety of tribes, religions, and cultures. Indonesia is not a new entity, it is a continuation of the history of the Dutch East Indies society which is a plural society consisting of various tribes, religions, races, and other groups (Saddam, et.al., 2020). The teachings of the ancestors of Indonesia, and the pious people (*salafu sholeh*) suggest accepting and living together with tolerant behavior.

The acceptance of plural life is based on two things, namely: First, philosophically it cannot be single, one style, or one pattern. Life is undoubtedly plural. Some live like to gather, while some like to be alone. Life is diverse, humans are different from uniform animals, animals that are abroad are the same as animals in the country that behave the same and nothing different. While humans are given freedom of choice and coupled with responsibility. Humans are given the freedom to choose which pattern to follow that is considered most appropriate. Plural living is a deep inevitability. People who accept the existence of diversity or plurality is called a tolerant attitude.

Second, humans live dialectically with their surroundings. People's lifestyles are different in each region or country, this is a necessity, which cannot be avoided must be so. Therefore, if you are not strong and cannot be different from others, then life will be miserable because there is no human being who is uniform according to wishes. Human beings are created with different minds and different ways of thinking. The ethical basis is that these different human beings want to be valued and respected for their life choices, as well as their ideas. Must care and be careful of the differences that exist so as not to trouble, and not hinder the happiness of others who are different. If it cannot accept a plural society, then there are several challenges, conflicts, domination, and competition.

Dubos (2017) argues that human diversity makes tolerance more than a virtue; it makes it a requirement for survival. The meaning of the phrase survival is to make humans survive in salvation, that is, with a tolerant attitude. If not, then you will find all three challenges.

The life of pluralism is the doctrine of multiplicity and is often used as the antithesis of monoism. In this life, the substance according to pluralism is a diverse life. Reality shows that life is plural, so all explanations are not singular. Therefore, in practice, the term pluralism can be used in various ways.

The Central Bureau of Statistics - *Badan Pusat Statistik* (2010) provides data that Indonesia is a plural country with 1,700 islands; 271,349,889 inhabitants; 1,340 tribes; 1,100 languages; and 6 recognized religions. The Ministry of Home Affairs - *Kementerian Dalam Negeri* (2020) states that there were 431,465 community organizations, and there were 16 General Election Parties in 2019 (General Election Commission – *Komisi Pemilihan Umum*, 2019). That is Indonesia has many variables. So to understand reality, you must be ready to face a plural Indonesia.

In some regions in Indonesia, there are the majority of Muslims, there are also areas that are majority non-Muslim. The type of thinking of each society in a different environment is influenced by the public society of each place of residence so that in everyday life to distinguish whether someone is pluralist, it manifests into three things, namely: exclusion, assimilation, and pluralism.

First, pola exclusion is the correct style; that oneself or the rest of the group is not true, and the model of thinking is exclusive. Exclusive in English means to exclude. So all the others or different, cannot enter into the truth. If you want to be right, you must first enter the group; Second, pola assimilation is believing that the most correct is me or his group, others can also be true but must meet some conditions of truth according to my group to get a match; Third, the pattern of pluralism is that other groups can fall into the category of truth according to other groups because each group or other people have their thoughts, understand and understand for the harmony of a beautiful life with a common vision, and do not collide with each other.

Indonesia is a country where that plural can be highlighted in these three patterns. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out whether this plural Indonesian state can create harmony in living together in interfaith based on exclusive patterns, assimilation patterns, and pluralist patterns.

The tendency towards exclusionary and inclusive attitudes can be seen in several studies. *First*, contestation for the truth of Islam in Indonesia offers arguments for Islamic thought using pluralist and humanist thinking methods (Wijaya, 2019). *Second*, moderate Islam and contemporary issues that explain Islam and pluralism in the context of Islamic theology and history as well as Indonesian history (Yakin, 2016). *Third*, an enlightening and enlightening Islam must continuously and without hesitation strive to respect the sanctity of the dignity of others, placing the other person in the heart as a creation of Allah Almighty. the equivalent (Muhammad,

2020).

These three tendencies of study in harmony with the interfaith religion view that plural societies in theological contexts have been present from the beginning. The concept of a plural society is a necessity present in every region of Indonesia which is one nation, but this diverse. But the reality is still experiencing friction in Indonesian society.

2. Patterns in Diversity

a. Exclusive Patterns

Exclusive comes from the English "exclusive" which means alone, with no other, separate from others, standing alone, solely, and having nothing to do with others. In general, exclusive is the attitude that views that the beliefs, and views of the mind and self themselves are the most correct, while the beliefs, views, thoughts, and principles held by other religions are wrong, misguided, and should be shunned.

The perspective on the limits of exclusivism itself needs to be clarified so as not to misplace the term. Because Islam as a concept and the religious conditions of plural Muslims are very different. When you find a phenomenon that shows exclusivism in some Muslims, it is usually stuck to convict that the concept of Islam is indeed exclusive. However, it must be returned to how the method of understanding they apply. This exclusive Islamic group is closed, rigid, jumud, not open to the latest developments, and still maintains orthodox beliefs. The problem of exclusivity and exclusion(as opposed to exclusive) is a continuation of neo-modernist thought/ideas to a more specific area after pluralism, especially in the field of theology.

Exclusive is the notion that only he or his group's views are the most correct. This idea often arises in the religious style of a radical who considers only he or his group the most correct. The roots of the radical are the beginning of this exclusive understanding.

The factors behind Islam's inclusion are doctrine, teachings, and understanding. The doctrine of the exclusive school of doctrine considers other religions such as Judaism and Christianity that originally came from God, to have deviated teachings. Although they try to criticize or analyze the previous book as if the previous book can be criticized. They do not see that a person is said to be a believer if they practice the pillars of faith, one of which is believing in the Torah, the Zabur, the Gospel, and the Quran.

Understanding that Islam is a religion brought by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and not Islam in the sense of the mission of obedience and submission and sincerity in the worship of Allah. This understanding resulted in them only accepting Islam and not accepting other religions. Exclusive Islam is an attitude that has traditionally been deeply entrenched in Muslim societies lately that Islam is the only path to truth and salvation.

The exclusive attitude can be divided into two parts, namely:

a. Exclusive to external; i.e. the view or belief that a religion of Islam is the truest religion, while other religions are considered heretical and will not be accepted by God. This view is based on the verse QS Ali Imran/3:19. Based on this, the word Islam contained in this verse is the religion brought by the Prophet of Muhammad, this agama is accepted in the sight of Allah, while other religions such as Judaism and Christianity are not recognized by God, considered heretical religions, will not be accepted by God and will bring harm in the afterlife.

b. Exclusive to internal; that is, the views, perceptions, and attitudes found in Islam, which recognize that only the school of exclusivism is right, and everything else is wrong.

Group of exclusive according to Fatimah in Kardi et.al. (2022) has two characteristics, namely: First, they apply a literal model of interpretation of the Qur'an, hadith, and the past, so that *ijtihad* is not central as their frame of mind; Second, they argue that salvation can be achieved through Islam. For them, Islam is the final religion that comes to correct other religions. Therefore, they challenge the authenticity of the scriptures of other religions.

The exclusive problem in Islam is a continuation of neomodernism thought/ideas to a more specific area after pluralism, precisely in the field of theology (Madjid, 1987). The idea departs that theology today seems to have been set up in the framework of an exclusive theology that considers the truth and salvation of a religion, to be the monopoly of a particular religion. While other religions, imposed even set other completely different standards "wrong and therefore lost in the middle of the road."This matter has already entered the realm of one's thinking. The perspective of a religious community towards another religion using its religious point of view.

This inclusive understanding is the root of radicalism. Radicalism is an understanding or school that wants social and political change by using violence as a stepping stone to justify their beliefs that are considered true. Therefore, radicalism can be understood as a state political understanding that requires large-scale changes and revolutions as a way to achieve a significant level of progress (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia – *Kementerian Agama RI*, 2014.)

Therefore, radicalism can be understood as a socio-political understanding that to achieve its goals uses violence, so radicalism in the name of religion is a tough attitude demonstrated by a group of adherents of a religion under the pretext of practicing the teachings of that religion.

b. Assimilation Pattern

According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary, assimilation is the adjustment or fusion of the original properties possessed with the properties of the surrounding environment (https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id). Assimilation can be formed on three conditions, namely:

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First, it becomes an association between individuals or groups intensively for a long time; Second, several groups have different cultures; and Third, the cultures of each group change and adapt to each other.

Assimilation can also be hampered due to several factors, namely:

1. Fear of the forces a culture faces.
2. The life of a certain group is isolated in society, such as minorities.
3. Strong in-group feelings can also be a barrier to assimilation.
4. The feeling that one particular group's culture is higher than another's culture.
5. Lack of knowledge of the culture faced.
6. At certain limits, differences in physical characteristics or skin color can be one of the obstacles to assimilation.
7. A feeling of superiority in individuals from one culture to another.
8. Interference from the ruling class with other minority groups can also interfere with the assimilation process. Especially if the minority group experiences several disturbances from the ruling class.
9. Sometimes factors that cause interest and coupled with personal disagreements can hinder the assimilation process.

While the driving factors of assimilation, namely:

1. Equal opportunities in economics.
2. The open attitude of the ruling class to society.
3. Intermarriage between groups of different cultures.
4. Tolerance among groups of different cultures.
5. Willingness to respect and respect foreigners, especially the culture brought.
6. Similarities to the elements of universal culture.

Therefore it can be understood that the understanding of a simulation is to believe that the most correct is me or the group, others can also be true, but must meet some conditions of truth according to my group to get a match.

c. Pluralist Pattern

Pluralism comes from the foreign term "pluralism" which means a framework of interaction in which each group displays respect and tolerance for each other, interacting without conflict or assimilation. Pluralism in the broadest sense can be seen as a choice, goal, as well as an answer to achieve harmony and harmony by several groups in pluralism, both ideologically, socially, and religiously. Pluralism can also mean ideas or views that recognize the existence of many or different things (heterogeneous) in a community (Fitriana, 2021).

Pluralism cannot be understood simply by saying that society is plural, and diverse, consisting of various tribes and religions, which only illustrates the impression of fragmentation, not pluralism. Pluralism should also not be understood simply as a negative good, only seen from its usefulness to get rid of fanaticism. Pluralism must be understood as the true interplay of diversity within the bonds of civilization. (Setiadi, et.al., 2023).

Fatwa Decree of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Number: 7/MUNAS VII/MUI/II/2005 confirms that pluralism is haram. This prohibition is because pluralism is an understanding that equates all religions (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, 2005).

K.H. Ma'ruf Amin explained that religious pluralism can be interpreted variously. If pluralism is interpreted as religious differences, for MUI there is no problem. That's something inevitable. Pluralism is distorted when pluralism is interpreted: *First*, to declare all religions to be true. This kind of understanding of MUI is not true according to all religious teachings. According to Islam itself, as Ma'ruf Amin said, the truth is Islam. If Islam is true, then others are wrong. Therefore, the true religion is Islam. The understanding that all teachings are true is distorted because it does not follow the teachings of Islam. *Second*, pluralism theology, which is a theology that mixes various religious teachings into one, and becomes a new religion. This kind of theology is the same as syncretism. That is not justified by the MUI.

If referred to in the Qur'an, then there are verses on the theme of religious pluralism, such as: 1) there is no compulsion in religion; 2) recognition of the existence of religions; 3) prophetic unity; and 4) the unity of the divine message.

3. Community Tolerance in Gorontalo and Manado

Gorontalo is known as one of the regions for example that has succeeded in making Islam the main identity of cultural buildings and community development. The influence of Islam in this region is believed to be a long and unique journey, both in terms of geographical position and from the successful historical narrative of the period of Islamic sultanates that have existed (Amin, 2012). The history of Islamicsasi in Gorontalo begins in the history of King Amai (1523-1550) was the foundation of Islamization in Gorontalo after marrying Owutango, the daughter of King Palasa Ogomonjolo (Kumojolo) in Siyendeng, Tomini who was related to the Kings of Ternate (Tacco, 1996).

King Amai's shaking hands began with his visit to strengthen cooperative relations with the kingdoms in Tomini Bay. In the Kingdom of Palasa, King Amai was lured and then proposed to Putri Owutango. After being agreed upon in the Palasa Kingdom, finally, Raja Amai's proposal was accepted with a condition that he must be Islamised and so directly the customs that apply to the Gorontalo community must be sourced from the Quran. This is evident when King Amai carried out reforms in the kingdom by

developing customary principles and community customs adapted to Islamic teachings (Tacco, 1996).

In the kingdom began to be established that the importance of customs was adjusted to the Islamic sharia. This formulation is known as the principle of "*saraa topa- topango to adat,*" meaning that religion rests on custom. The customary design made by King Amai with the 8 minor kings has produced a customary formula of 185 customs that are applied (Nur, 1979).

The great influence of Islam in the centuries after the period of King Amai can be seen for example in the development of religious sciences. This is proven by Riedel himself in his writing in 1870 which succeeded in registering 77 classical Islamic itabs circulating and taught in the Gorontalo region (Riedel, 1870).

However, Gorontalo Province is an area that has diverse cultures and diverse tribes. So that the religions that developed in this province became diverse as well, including Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The religion that many residents of Gorontalo adhere to Islam. Gorontalo people can almost be said to be all Muslims (96.36%) who follow the philosophy of this region "*Adati hula to syaraa; syaraa hulahula to Qurani*" or " Tradition is essentially a religion, religion joined Quran." Gorontalo is also known as the "City of Serambi Medina" with its infrastructure and Islamic building forms.

Manado is the provincial capital located at the very tip of the island of Sulawesi. Manado is the capital city of North Sulawesi with a population based on the National Socioeconomic Survey (SUSENAS 2005) of 422,355 people so that the population density reaches 2,686 people / km^2 with a Muslim population of 114,709 people (Pramesti, 2020).

Manado which has a majority Christian population, while Islam is the second largest religion apart from other religions in the country, the diversity and plurality that exist in its people make Manado City rich in culture. Society shows a deep intercultural relationship between various kinds of societies that occur as a result of cultural adaptation to local cultural values.

Currently, the majority of Manado's population comes from the Minahasa tribe, because the Manado region is in the Minahasa land/area. The original inhabitants of Manado are a sub-tribe of Tombulu seen from several village names in Manado derived from the Tombulu language, for example: *Wenang* (Tree of Authority / MahaAuthority - material for making *kolintang*), *Tumumpa* (down), *Mahakeret* (Shouting), *Tikala Ares* (*Walak Ares Tombulu*, where the word 'ares' means punished), *Ranotana* (Groundwater), *Winangun* (Built), *Wawonasa* (*wawoinasa* - above the sharpened), *Pinaesaan* (place of unity), *Pakowa* (*Pakewa* Tree), *Teling* (Feathers/bamboo to make utensils), *Titiwungen* (which is dug), *Tuminting* (from Ting-Ting: Bell, insert -um- means to indicate verb, so *Tuminting*: Ringing the Bell), *Pondol* (End), *Wanea* (from Wanua: meaning country),

Malalayang is a Bantik tribe, other ethnic groups in Manado today are the Sangir tribe, Gorontalo tribe, Mongondow tribe, Arab tribe, Babontehu tribe, Talaud tribe, Chinese tribe, Siau tribe, and Borgo people. Because of the large number of Peranakan communities, the existence of Arab Village which is within a radius near Pasar '45 still survives today and has become one of the religious tourism destinations. In addition, there are also Javanese, Batak, Makassar, Minangkabau, and Acehnese.

Torang samua basudara, a slogan that has now turned into a cultural value, was brought forth by the former Governor of North Sulawesi Lt. Gen. (Ret.) E.E. Mangindaan to be an adhesive weapon in avoiding SARA (Tribe, Religion, Race, Inter-Group) conflicts that spread in Eastern Indonesia (1998-1999), so that the sense of unity and unity of the community remains glued. Since its inception, this slogan has become a living icon of the Manadonese people.

Manado and Gorontalo are two regions that were originally included in one province, namely North Sulawesi Province. At the beginning of the period, Gorontalo Province separated from Manado, North Sulawesi Province, and became Gorontalo Province.

Gorontalo with a majority Muslim population while Manado with a majority of protestant Christians is very interesting to study its religious pluralism. When Bersatu became one province, North Sulawesi also looked harmonious until now.

Religious events seem to the government always provide space for justice in celebrating religious events. Even governments with different beliefs will be present at events with different faith backgrounds. The Manado government is indeed mostly held by Christians, but it t id a k become a big problem in the order of life in North Sulawesi Province it seems.

Furthermore, there is an interesting thing seen in the population section of residences in these two areas. There are special villages for followers of certain religions, for example, there are villages that are majority Muslim and there are also villages that are majority Christian. It is found in two regions, both in Gorontalo and Manado. Although there are also villages that blend between religious believers which usually occur in residential areas.

The separation between Gorontalo and Manado according to Damis led to a series of lawsuits from Gorontalo's level II regions (now at the district and city levels) which focused on the issue of power-sharing considered unequal because the "central government" (Jakarta and Manado) was very dominant, while level II areas are subordinated. Gorontalo people whose regional status is in the Level II area feel that they are treated unfairly in terms of economy which is characterized by the exploitation of regional, cultural, and political potential, both by the Level I Regional Government (Manado) as the provincial capital dominated by Minahasa ethnic and the Central Government (Jakarta) which is dominated by Javanese. (Damis, 2019)

The Post-New Order Government is well aware that the crisis cannot be overcome if it does not include all components of the nation for the sustainability of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. For this reason, regional empowerment is one solution, so Law No. 22 of 1999 and Law No. 25 of 1999 were issued, which are often called the Law of Regional Autonomy. The purpose of this law is essentially to make improvements to governance and development by emphasizing the principles of democracy, community participation, equity, and justice, and paying attention to the potential of regional cultural diversity. Therefore, the birth

of these two laws has given spirit to Gorontalo people led by students from Gorontalo to carry out a secession movement from its parent province, namely North Sulawesi Province.

Gorontalo, which is known as a region and its people who are still thick with customs based on Islamic teachings, seemed so tolerant for approximately 30 years the North Sulawesi province area is led by Minahasa people who are different religions from Gorontalo people. Socio-historically and culturally the people in this area view that ideally they are led by Gorontalo people themselves who are at the same time able to implement the traditional and religious values they profess. Now, the hopes and dreams of the Gorontalo people to form a province have come true and it is the newest form of regional political expression (Damis, 2019).

The pluralism of these two regions is very clearly displayed in the circumstances, regions, and histories that we are currently witnessing. This fact is realized or does not have an impact on harmony or disharmony, peace, or unrest between religious people. Facing this symptom, if each religious believer is aware of each other's existence among followers of other religions, then the expected religious harmony can be built properly. There are symptoms of pseudo-tolerance in pluralism maintaining tolerance in these two areas. It seems tolerant in pluralism but the reality seems pseudo. The Ministry of Religious Affairs' strategic plan for 2020-2024 which is in line with the President's mission in Nawacita needs more attention.

D.   CONCLUSION

The majority of the Gorontalo area is Muslim, in this study, the author sees an effort to accept coexistence with non-Muslims, such as in Randangan Village, Pohuwato Regency where there are Islamic boarding schools that blend with Hindu and Christian residents. In Gorontalo City, there are still settlements that are majority followers of certain religions. However, there has never been a conflict between religious believers in Gorontalo. While Manado with a minority Muslim population while Gorontalo with a majority Muslim population wants to show plurality by maintaining mutual tolerance between religious communities. There seems to be no conflict between religious differences so far. However, the selection of residents' residences by choosing specific areas of certain religions seems to give an assessment that they cannot live next door with different religions or not. It seems that the tolerance produced from these two areas is pseudo-tolerance.

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