

Dynamics of Maintaining Religious Harmony in Ambon City, Maluku Province

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the factors that have played a key role in maintaining religious harmony in the city of Ambon, Maluku. Despite its history of sectarian conflicts in the past, Ambon managed to create an environment that supported inter-religious harmony. This research uses a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews and content analysis of relevant primary and secondary sources. The results showed that the history of harmony in Ambon became a strong foundation for building harmony today. Interfaith dialogue is regularly held, providing a platform for religious and community leaders to share understanding and celebrate diversity. The active involvement of the community in joint religious events is also a key element in forming unity amid differences. Inclusive religious education and the role of religious leaders in promoting the message of peace are significant factors in shaping tolerance among Ambonese people. An education system that introduces the values of tolerance early on helps create a generation that values diversity. Despite its success, the study also highlights the challenges Ambon faces in maintaining harmony, especially related to the impact of globalization and social change. However, the spirit of mutual cooperation and mutual commitment continues to be the main driver in efforts to maintain religious harmony in Ambon. This research contributes to our understanding of social dynamics and key factors that can support the development of a harmonious society amidst religious diversity. The implications of these findings can be used as a basis for the development of policies and programs that are more effective in maintaining religious harmony across a variety of social contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ambon, as a city located in the Maluku archipelago, Indonesia, has abundant cultural and religious wealth. Ambonese society consists of various tribes and religions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Traditional

Beliefs. Although these differences exist, Ambonese people have always managed to foster a sense of tolerance and mutual respect. Unfortunately, its history also records a phase of sectarian conflict in the early 2000s, which undermined inter-religious harmony.

Nevertheless, Ambon was able to overcome this difficult time and set its attention on building strong harmony [1].

After the conflict period, there was a significant shift in the social approach of Ambonese society. Interfaith dialogue is one of the main initiatives carried out regularly. This forum provides a space for religious and community leaders to discuss differences in beliefs, build deeper understanding, and celebrate the diversity that is the strength of Ambonese society.

The education system in Ambon also has a big role in maintaining religious harmony. An inclusive curriculum reflects the values of diversity and teaches tolerance from an early age. Children grow up understanding that diversity is wealth, not a reason for disagreement. Ambon successfully integrates the values of tolerance and mutual respect into the educational curriculum. This is the foundation for forming a young generation that grows up with an awareness of diversity and the importance of peaceful coexistence.

The role of religious figures is also very important in reshaping harmony. By involving religious leaders in lectures, sermons, and humanitarian initiatives, the people of Ambon get direction and inspiration to live harmoniously. These figures are not only spiritual leaders, but also ambassadors of peace who actively promote tolerance among religious communities. Efforts to maintain religious harmony in Ambon are not only limited to words, but have been realized through various initiatives and interfaith dialogues. Religious dialogue forums are regularly held, creating spaces for religious and community leaders to share views, deepen understanding, and celebrate diversity [2].

Joint religious activities are also an important means of fostering a sense of unity. Various religious celebrations, be it Christmas, Eid al-Fitr, or other religious celebrations, are often attended by religious people of various faiths. This not only creates a moment of togetherness, but also portrays a strong unity in the midst of differences [3].

Although Ambon has achieved significant success, the study also aims to highlight the challenges faced. Globalization and social change bring new challenges that can test the harmony that has been formed. Therefore, a deep understanding of how Ambonese people respond to these dynamics is needed and how they maintain harmony in the midst of such changes.

Ambon is living proof that religious harmony is not just a slogan, but the foundation of common life. By maintaining and developing the values of harmony, Ambon is not only a peaceful place but also provides inspiration for other cities in building an inclusive and harmonious society. This research is expected to provide comprehensive insight into the history, social development, and current dynamics involving religious harmony in Ambon. The findings of this study are expected to lay the foundation for better policy development and more effective strategies in supporting and maintaining inter-religious harmony in diverse communities such as Ambon.

2. METHODS

This research will use a qualitative approach to explore and understand the factors that play a key role in maintaining religious harmony in Ambon, Maluku. The qualitative approach is considered the most appropriate because it allows researchers to detail and gain deep insights into people's experiences, perceptions, and attitudes related to religious harmony. The reasons for using a qualitative approach are: (1) Qualitative researchers pay more attention to the process than the result or product; (2) Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning, that is, how people seek to understand the lives, experiences, and structures of their environment; (3) Qualitative researchers are the main instrument in data collection and analysis. Data is obtained through human instruments rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines; (4) Qualitative research is closely related to fieldwork. That

is, researchers are physically involved directly with people, settings, places, or institutions to observe or record behavior in its natural setting; (5) Qualitative research is descriptive, in the sense that researchers are interested in the process, meaning, and understanding obtained through words or pictures [4].

Meanwhile, to obtain data to answer the problems as stated above, a descriptive method is used. The reason for using the descriptive method is that it is used to give a clearer picture of social situations. In addition, descriptive methods are more specific by focusing on certain aspects and often showing relationships between various variables. The descriptive method is a method of examining the status of a human group, an object, a condition, a system of thought or a class of events in the present. The purpose of this descriptive research is to make systematic descriptions, images or paintings as well as relationships between the phenomena investigated.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 *History and Foundation of Religious Harmony*

The history of Ambon played a crucial role in building a strong foundation for religious harmony. Historical analysis shows that despite experiencing sectarian conflict in 1999-2002, Ambonese people have chosen to focus on restoring and rebuilding harmony. This phase of conflict became the starting point for the people of Ambon to jointly knit back the severed relationship [3].

Through interviews with community leaders who are living witnesses to this history, the results show that the struggle through times of conflict leaves a deep trace. The will to move from a phase of conflict to a period of reconstruction and reconciliation is a strong foundation for harmony today. Ambonese people embrace the spirit of gotong-royong and the desire to build a better future together, regardless of religious differences.

The history of sectarian conflicts that have plagued Ambon has become a severe

test for religious harmony. However, Ambonese society managed to turn historical trauma into motivation to rebuild severed relationships. This period of recovery marked the importance of interfaith and ethnic collaboration in healing social wounds.

The importance of delving into the history of this conflict is to understand that the harmony we are witnessing today did not just materialize. It is the result of concerted effort, deep reflection on the past, and a determination not to repeat the mistakes of the past. The history and foundations of harmony in Ambon inspire that every society, despite being entangled in conflict, has the potential to rebuild shared prosperity through collaboration and dialogue.

3.2 *Interfaith Dialogue and Joint Religious Activities*

Research findings show that interfaith dialogue forums are an effective vehicle in fostering and strengthening religious harmony in Ambon. Through regular dialogue, religious and community leaders can exchange ideas, create a deeper understanding of each other's beliefs, and celebrate diversity. Joint religious activities, such as Christmas and Eid al-Fitr, are also a means to strengthen relations between religious communities.

These results show that interfaith dialogue and joint religious activities are effective strategies in creating closeness and reducing inter-religious disparities in Ambon. Dialogue opens open channels of communication and builds mutual respect. Joint religious activities, while celebrating differences, also show that Ambonese people are able to find a point of unity amid differences.

The importance of dialogue and joint religious activities also lies in its ability to create inclusive spaces for all. Everyone, regardless of religious background, can participate in the process of establishing and maintaining harmony. This illustrates the open and inclusive spirit that is the social capital in Ambon.

3.3 *Inclusive Religious Education*

Research findings show that inclusive religious education has become an important factor in building and maintaining harmony. A curriculum that embraces the values of tolerance and respect for religious differences is integral in shaping broad understanding among the young generation of Ambon.

Inclusive religious education plays a key role in shaping positive perspectives on religious differences. By incorporating the values of tolerance in the curriculum, the people of Ambon are able to form a generation that has a deep understanding of diversity and is able to coexist peacefully.

The awareness of tolerance that grows from an early age through education becomes the foundation for an open and inclusive attitude in the future. In addition, inclusive religious education also creates space for better dialogue and understanding among generations with diverse religious backgrounds.

3.4 *The Role of Religious Figures in Society*

Data analysis shows that religious figures have a very important role in shaping and maintaining harmony. Through lectures, sermons, and humanitarian initiatives, they managed to become agents of peace and set concrete examples of how to coexist peacefully.

The role of religious figures as spiritual leaders is a key factor in bringing positive changes in Ambonese society. Through messages of peace and tolerance conveyed through lectures and sermons, religious leaders create a strong moral direction for their people.

In addition, humanitarian initiatives carried out by religious leaders also have a direct positive impact on social conditions in Ambon. They not only become spiritual leaders but also agents of change in society.

3.5 *Social Integration (Durkheimian Perspective)*

The theory of social integration, especially developed by Emile Durkheim, provides a solid theoretical basis for

discussing the phenomenon of religious harmony in Ambon [5]. This theory highlights the importance of social solidarity and community integration in maintaining stability and harmony [6]. First, Durkheim distinguished between two types of solidarity: mechanical and organic. Mechanical solidarity deals with a society dominated by the similarity of values and norms, where individuals are interrelated due to similarities in ways of thinking and acting. On the other hand, organic solidarity occurs in more complex societies, where differences in roles and specializations create interdependent dependencies. In the context of Ambon, the shift from mechanical to organic solidarity can be explained as the result of efforts to build harmony after a period of conflict.

Second, the role of religion and social dependence. Durkheim emphasized the integrative role of religion in creating social solidarity [7]. How religion in Ambon becomes the social glue and the way in which religious practices create social dependence can be analyzed in depth. Efforts to maintain and strengthen the role of religion as an agent of social integration are essential in the context of harmony [8]. Third, anomie and the challenges of modernization. Durkheim also introduced the concept of anomie, which is a condition of social imbalance that can arise due to profound changes in society [9]. In the discussion, the author explores how modernization challenges, such as globalization, can create anomie if not managed wisely. Religious harmony can be threatened if society experiences a crisis of values or identity due to profound change.

First, the transformation of solidarity in Ambon. We can see how societies undergo a transformation of solidarity from times of conflict to the re-establishment of more complex social relations. Interfaith dialogue and joint religious activities become a means for communities to build organic solidarity, where differences are recognized and valued as an integral part of diversity. Second, the role of religion as a social glue is key in maintaining harmony. Discussions can detail

how religious practices create strong social bonds, remind people of shared values, and be a source of inspiration in efforts to maintain harmony. Third, the discussion can explore how modernization challenges, such as globalization, can affect harmony. Within Durkheim's theoretical framework, efforts to mitigate anomie and build social resilience are important to maintain social stability and integration [10].

By detailing and integrating the concepts of Durkheim's social integration theory, it provides a deeper understanding of how religious harmony in Ambon is maintained and developed. This analysis helps identify key factors that support harmony, understand the dynamics of social change, and respond wisely to modernization challenges.

4. CONCLUSION

Through this research, it can be concluded that Ambon, Maluku, has succeeded in maintaining religious harmony through deep history, interfaith dialogue, inclusive religious education, and the role of religious leaders. These results provide an in-depth look at the strategies and factors that support harmony in diverse societies.

The implication of these findings is the importance of maintaining a collaborative and inclusive spirit in building harmony. The emphasis on inclusive religious education, continuous interfaith dialogue, and the positive role of religious leaders can serve as models for other societies that want to strengthen harmony in the midst of diversity. In addition, the challenges of globalization and social change demonstrate the need for adaptation and continuous strengthening of the foundations of harmony in the future.

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