

## Social Interaction in the Multicultural Society of Bandung City: An Inspiration for Interfaith Harmony

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### Abstract

*Bandung is a highly diverse city, and Kampung Toleransi, located in Balonggede Village, Regol District, serves as a microcosm of this diversity. The neighborhood was founded upon the pluralistic character of its residents, who come from various religious backgrounds—evidenced by the presence of three houses of worship in close proximity. While communities with such diversity are often perceived as difficult to manage in terms of harmonious interaction, Kampung Toleransi presents a contrasting model of social relations. This study seeks to analyze religious tolerance as expressed through everyday social interactions that contribute to maintaining harmony in Kampung Toleransi. Employing a sociological approach to religion, the research is grounded in Mukti Ali's conceptualization of tolerance and harmony, alongside George Simmel's theory of social interaction. Utilizing qualitative methods, data were collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis. The findings reveal that the values of religious tolerance in Kampung Toleransi are embedded in local government policies, the leadership roles of religious figures, and the application of shared normative principles. Forms of interaction include subordination to a single leader, coordination among multiple leaders, adherence to ideal principles, and the exercise of individual autonomy—each reflecting various dimensions of tolerance in practice. In conclusion, the patterns of harmonious interaction in Kampung Toleransi offer a compelling model for cultivating tolerance in socially diverse settings. This model holds significant relevance for replication in other urban and regional contexts, particularly within West Java and across Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** Social interaction, religious tolerance, multiculturalism, Kampung Toleransi

### Introduction

Indonesia is a country rich in diversity, ranging from ethnicity, race, ethnicity, language, and culture, to religion, which is characterized by the motto “*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*” (*berbeda-beda tetapi tetap satu*; Unity in Diversity) (Putra, Yustisia, Osteen, Hudiyana, & Meinarno, 2022; Sidi, 2020). However, this diversity can become a potential conflict if it is not balanced with a strong attitude of tolerance as an important foundation for maintaining unity (Huda et al., 2020; Mazya, Ridho, & Irfani, 2024). Currently, intra- and inter-religious intolerance in Indonesia has triggered various acts of violence,

such as terrorism, suicide bombings, the destruction of places of worship, blasphemy, and persecution of religious leaders. These actions have caused unrest and conflicts that disrupt harmony in religious, societal, national, and state life (Arifinsyah, Andy, & Damanik, 2020). This phenomenon demonstrates that religion has a dual role, serving as both a constructive and destructive factor. Religion can foster both tolerance and intolerance, depending on how it is understood and applied (Abdurrazak, Azhari, Wanda, Ambakti, & Humamurizqi, 2022; Deitch, 2022).

Bandung, as one of the cities with a high

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level of social heterogeneity, has been listed as an intolerant city. This designation is based on several research reports, including those from Komnas HAM RI, The Wahid Institute, and the Wahid Foundation Team, which indicate that numerous violations of tolerance values have occurred in Bandung, as well as in the West Java Province in general (Halim, 2021). Some religious conflicts such as the establishment of the Rehoboth Church and the Ahmadiyah Mosque, reflect friction between religious communities triggered by various background issues, especially sensitive ones such as religion (Pauzian, 2024). On the other hand, the Tolerance Village in Balonggede Village, Regol District, Bandung City, is an interesting example where people with different religious backgrounds can coexist peacefully. This fact shows the potential to learn more about the mechanisms of social interaction that support interreligious harmony.

Previous research has explored religious tolerance from various perspectives, such as research that explores the important role of religious institutions and leaders in striving for harmony in religion (Pajarianto, Pribadi, & Sari, 2022; Warren, 2024). Then, research that explores tolerance education in schools is an important capital for students to have a tolerant character or attitude (Kartono et al., 2025; Mappiasse & Hayadin, 2022), and research that explores the approach of pluralism theory in a multicultural society (Suradi, Kenedi, & Surahman, 2020). However, this study has significant differences compared to previous studies. This study aims to examine and analyze the social interaction model formed in a multicultural society in the Tolerance Village, which is the basis for creating harmony between religious communities. The focus of the research, the research subject, and the theory used in this study have differences from previous research, confirming the novelty presented. The results of the research are expected to be able to provide a new perspective on efforts to maintain harmony amid religious diversity.

## Research Method

This study uses a sociological approach to

religion with macro analysis (Adnan, 2020) to explore the social system that underlies social interaction in Tolerance Village, Balonggede Village, Regol District, Bandung City. This approach aims to understand the phenomenon of religious tolerance in the context of a multicultural society. The subjects of the study include the people of Kampung Toleransi with different religious backgrounds, namely Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism. The key informants comprised of 10 individuals, including village officials from Balonggede Village, community leaders, religious leaders from the three religions, and the surrounding community who were directly involved in the social life of the Tolerance Village. This study uses a qualitative design with a case study method (Sugiyono, 2016) to explore the phenomenon of religious tolerance reflected in social interaction. The research begins with data collection through field observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2013). This process is carried out in stages to obtain valid and relevant data. The research instruments used include semi-structured interview to explore the informant's understanding and experience related to religious tolerance. In addition, supporting materials in the form of field notes and documentation photos are used to enrich the data. The research data was collected from primary sources, namely the results of interviews with key informants who had in-depth insights related to religious tolerance in the Tolerance Village, and secondary data obtained from various books, journals, websites, and other sources relevant to the research topic.

The collected data was analyzed using a thematic analysis method through several stages (Adelliani, Sucirahayu, & Zanjabila, 2023). The first stage is data familiarization, which is reading and understanding the data thoroughly to identify the initial pattern or theme. Next, the initial code is given by marking important parts of the data that are relevant to the focus of the research. The codes that have been given are then grouped into the main themes through the theme identification process. The next stage is theme review and refinement, where the resulting themes are re-examined to ensure that

they reflect the content of the data thoroughly and are relevant. Finally, the interpretation and reporting of the analysis results are carried out by compiling research findings into an in-depth narrative, using the theory of religious tolerance from Mukti Ali and the theory of social interaction from George Simmel as the framework of analysis. Mukti Ali's theory, which emphasizes the principle of *"agree in disagreement"* (Al Haidary, 2021; Kosasih, Al Mighwar, Harun, Syaie, & Dorloh, 2024), is used to analyze how the people of Kampung Toleransi build an attitude of tolerance. Meanwhile, George Simmel's theory is applied to understand social interactions in two forms: superordination (domination) and subordination (obedience) (Ritzer, 2014; Smelser, 2023), including variations of subordination in individuals, group structures, ideal principles, and individual freedom (Johnson, 1994).

## Results and Discussion

### A. Tolerance Village, Balonggede Village, Regol District, Bandung City

The Tolerance Village is located in RW 04 and RW 05, in Balonggede Village, Regol District, Bandung City. This village is about 800 meters from Bandung City Square. The complexity of diversity in the Tolerance Village is very high, as seen from the number of residents in Balonggede Village which reaches 11,686 people, consisting of 5,893 men and 5,793 women. The diversity of religions in this region reflects the presence of all major religions in Indonesia. The majority of the population is Muslim with as many as 8,094 people, followed by Christians as many as 2,175 people, Catholics 327 people, Buddhists 214 people, Hindus 12 people, and Confucians 9 people. This data was obtained from the Profile and Typology of Balonggede Village in 2019 as of January. Regarding livelihood, the people of Balonggede Village have various professions, such as traders, private employees, civil servants, TNI members, retirees, and others. Based on the diversity of these professions, the level of economic prosperity of the community in Balonggede Village can be categorized as

moderate to high. The diversity in the Tolerance Village is also reflected in the existence of three houses of worship next to each other, namely the As-Salam Mosque (Islam), the Karuna Mukti Temple (Buddhist), and the Kalam Kudus Church (Christianity). This is clear evidence of harmony and tolerance among religious communities in the region.



Figure 1. Muslim House of Worship: As-Salam Mosque.



Figure 2. Buddhist House of Worship: Karuna Mukti Temple



Figure 3. Christian House of Worship: Kalam Kudus Church.

Figures 1, 2, and 3 depict three houses of worship a mosque, a church, and a Buddhist temple located in close proximity to one another. The As-Salam Mosque and the Karuna Mukti Temple stand side by side, separated only by Jalan Sasak Gantung. Meanwhile, the Kalam Kudus Church is situated approximately 50 meters from the Karuna Mukti Temple. The presence of these three houses of worship highlights the religious diversity of the residents of Kampung Toleransi.

If associated with Karl Marx's theory of social classes, a society characterized by diversity such as in the Tolerance Village has the potential to experience conflict. Marx stated that capitalist society is divided into two classes, namely capitalists (owners of the means of production) and workers (workers) (Siddiqui, 2023). In this system, economically strong or majority groups often dominate weaker groups. This dominance can lead to alienation, where vulnerable groups feel marginalized or lose control of important aspects of their lives, such as jobs, identities, and social relationships (Rehbein, 2020).

However, the reality in Tolerance Village is different. Despite the differences in social and religious classes, the people in this village can create harmony. The existence of three adjacent places of worship, namely the As-Salam Mosque (Islam), the Karuna Mukti Temple (Buddhist), and the Kalam Kudus Church (Christianity) is a symbol of tolerance among religious people. The relationship established in the Tolerance Village shows that mutual respect can reduce the potential for conflicts that often arise in a society with social and economic diversity. This is in line with the view that a harmonious life can be achieved when society has a collective consciousness to respect each other, regardless of class differences or beliefs (Ho & Barton, 2022; Nasution, Sutrisno, Nuryadin, Yasin, & Pribadi, 2025).

In Kampung Toleransi, religious practices reflect spirituality and strengthen social bonds. A Buddhist leader at Vihara Karuna Mukti shared, "The spirit of togetherness is real here. When we faced challenges in obtaining permits for the vihara, support came not just from

Buddhists but also from other religious leaders. Habib Syarif Muhammad Al-Aydrus, a Muslim leader, actively helped in the process, ensuring everything went smoothly. This proves that interfaith cooperation is more than just words—it can be realized through real actions." (Anton Muljana, Interview, April 10, 2023). This proves that interreligious cooperation can overcome the potential dominance of certain groups over others.

During the interview, Teguh Setiadi, a government staff member, stated, "This Tolerance Village is a shared home that values mutual respect. Residents are free to practice their religion without interference. In daily life, they support each other regardless of religious differences." (Teguh Setiadi, Interview, April 13, 2023). This reflects the principle of tolerance between religious communities, where there is no coercion in religion, and every individual has the right to choose or embrace a religion according to his or her beliefs (Fuad & Masuwd, 2023). God Almighty does not prohibit humans from living in a society with people who have different beliefs (Ishak & Mikea Manitra, 2022). As stipulated in the law, every citizen has the freedom to exercise their rights, as long as it remains within the limits of the applicable rules (Bagir, Asfinawati, Suhadi, & Arianingtyas, 2020). This situation shows that the people of Kampung Toleransi have successfully implemented the values and attitudes of tolerance in their daily lives.

In an interview, Rusman, the Head of RW 05 in Balonggede Village, emphasized that religious harmony is achieved when people respect differences in belief. Living in peace is difficult if there are views that undermine other religions or claims of absolute truth. He stated, "To maintain harmony, we must avoid sensitive statements that could cause division. Even though we have different beliefs, we must always respect and appreciate one another." (Rusman, Interview, April 7, 2023). In line with this, Anton Muljana, a Buddhist leader, explained that in matters of faith, one should stay firm in their beliefs while respecting others. He stated, "I believe in my religion, and others believe in theirs. What matters most is how we



can live peacefully together without feeling superior.” (Anton Muljana, Interview, April 10, 2023). The statements from both interviewees reaffirm that mutual respect and religious tolerance are the key foundations for fostering a harmonious society.

Religious harmony can be achieved when diverse communities can understand the basics and limitations of their respective religious teachings and accept, respect, and respect one another. This is in line with the statement of Mukti Ali (1992) who stated, *“Harmony in religious life can be created if each person is tolerant of each other and open-minded (tolerant)”*. Julius, a Christian leader from the Kalam Kudus Church, emphasized, *“In differences, we should not impose our beliefs on others. Practicing religion means following our faith sincerely while respecting others without judging them”* (Julius, Interview, April 19, 2023).

This understanding is in line with the concept formulated by Mukti Ali, namely *“Agree in Disagreement”*. This concept reflects the importance of respecting differences, especially in terms of religion, in realizing a harmonious life in a pluralistic society.

*A religious person must believe that the religion he embraces is the best and most correct religion. And others are also welcome, even appreciated, to believe and be convinced that the religion they embrace is the best and most true religion. Because if he does not believe that the religion he embraces is the most correct and the best religion, then it is foolish to embrace that religion. With the belief that the religion he embraces is the religion that behaves the most, he is born according to his inner words, which is the encouragement of the religion he embraces. Then between one religion and another, there are still many similarities. And it is on this understanding that respect and appreciation are grown. With a scientific basis, harmony in religious life can be created. Respect human beings with all their totality, including their religion* (Ali, 1992).

As explained earlier, religious tolerance requires a balanced understanding of exclusivity and inclusiveness. An exclusive attitude means understanding the religion that is practiced in-depth and consistent with a personal spiritual experience. Meanwhile, an

inclusive attitude means respecting the religious practices of others who have different beliefs. By understanding these two attitudes, one can avoid extremism, excessive, or fanaticism in religion.

The Tolerance Village in Balonggede, Bandung City, demonstrates strong interfaith harmony despite potential conflicts arising from religious and social class differences, as well as Karl Marx’s theory of class dominance. However, diversity in this village fosters unity through mutual respect. This is evident in the coexistence of three places of worship—As-Salam Mosque, Karuna Mukti Temple, and Kalam Kudus Church—which serve as symbols of tolerance and interfaith collaboration. Support from religious leaders and the community, such as the assistance of Muslim leader Habib Syarif in securing permits for the construction of Karuna Mukti Temple, further strengthens harmony in this village. An inclusive approach allows individuals to practice their faith freely without facing discrimination. Religious harmony here is not just about accepting differences but also about respecting them to create a balanced and peaceful social life. With a deep understanding of their religious teachings and an inclusive mindset, the people of Tolerance Village have successfully transformed diversity into a unifying strength.

## **B. Social Interaction of the Tolerance Village Community in Maintaining Religious Harmony**

Building harmony in society is not a simple task. It requires policies, strategies, and various approaches, both sociologically and theologically. Especially in a plural society with a complex level of diversity, it takes expertise and the ability to interact well. According to Curtis in Masrurah et.al (2022), three main skills must be possessed to interact in a pluralistic society, namely cooperation, the ability to resolve conflicts, and compassion.

Based on the results of the author’s analysis of the research in Tolerance Village, Balonggede Village, there are several findings related to the social interaction of the community there. From

the study, the author obtained the following data:

### 1. Harmonious Interaction between Religious Communities

Religious leaders in Tolerance Village continue to foster positive interactions through openness, mutual respect, and appreciation. One example is the establishment of Karuna Mukti Temple, made possible with the support and wisdom of Habib Syarif Muhammad Al-Aydrus. Anton Muljana, a Buddhist leader, stated, "The construction of this temple involved many parties, including Habib Syarif Muhammad Al-Aydrus. He provided great support in the permitting process and ensured everyone felt comfortable. His support reflects the harmonious interfaith relationships here. We don't just coexist; we actively support one another" (Anton Muljana, Interview, April 10, 2023).

Harmonious interactions are not limited to religious leaders but also involve the entire community. Ahyi Muhyi, Secretary of Balonggede Village, shared how the Christian community often helps Muslims during worship, especially during Friday prayers and Islamic holidays. "During Friday prayers, friends from the church help by looking after sandals outside the mosque, managing traffic, and ensuring everything runs smoothly. The same happens during Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Adha—they assist with traffic control and security. This has become a tradition that reflects our mutual care and solidarity." (Ahyi Muhyi, Interview, April 1, 2023). Additionally, "Muslims, Buddhists, and Christians collaborate in various religious activities. "During major events at churches or temples, Muslims also participate, mainly in traffic management and maintaining order. No one feels superior because our main priority is togetherness." (Ahyi Muhyi, Interview, April 1, 2023).

Positive interactions are also evident during religious celebrations. Rusman, the Head of RW 05, explained, "During Christmas, Eid al-Fitr, Vesak, or Nyepi, residents visit places of worship—not to participate in rituals, but to strengthen social bonds. We come to offer

greetings and show respect. There are no barriers between us because we are all neighbors living side by side." (Rusman, Interview, April 7, 2023). Another example of social interaction in Tolerance Village is the affordable market organized by the Church. Julius, a Christian leader from the Kalam Kudus Church, explained, "Every year, we hold an affordable market to help the community. The goods we distribute are not just for church members but for all residents, regardless of religion. Muslims, Buddhists, or anyone else is welcome to receive essential supplies. For us, what matters most is togetherness and helping one another." (Julius, Interview, April 19, 2023). This experience of diversity reflects the religious tolerance that has become a tradition in the community.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Church also played a role in supporting the community by organizing a free vaccination program. Anton Muljana, a Buddhist religious leader, shared, "During the pandemic, accessing vaccines was not easy for everyone. The Church then organized free vaccinations and ensured that all residents could receive them. Interestingly, they even allocated 50 special slots for Buddhists to get vaccinated. This demonstrates that interfaith solidarity is truly present here." (Anton Muljana, Interview, April 10, 2023).

Religious harmony in Tolerance Village is not only maintained by religious leaders but also supported by young people who are actively involved in the Tolerance Youth community. Julius explained, "We, the young people here, understand that diversity is a part of our lives. Therefore, we regularly hold discussions and dialogues about diversity. During the inauguration of Kampung Toleransi, young people from various religions visited places of worship, starting with the Catholic Church, then the Protestant Church, followed by the Vihara, and finally the As-Salam Mosque. Our goal is not to compare religions but to understand and respect each other." (Julius, Interview, April 19, 2023). These activities demonstrate that tolerance in Tolerance Village is not merely a concept but a lived reality, practiced daily through concrete actions that

involve all elements of society.

Harmonious social interaction in the Tolerance Village is not only limited to relationships between religious leaders but also involves the active participation of interfaith communities, ranging worship activities to social actions, such as cheap markets and free vaccinations. This shows that harmony in this village is built through a synergy between sociological approaches, such as cooperation in interfaith activities, and theological approaches, such as the teachings of mutual respect in each religion. The presence of the "Tolerance Youth" community as an agent of change shows the importance of the role of the younger generation in promoting dialogue, diversity discussions, and visits to houses of worship to strengthen understanding of diversity. This combination of the roles of religious leaders, communities, and youth creates solid and inclusive social relationships, which can overcome potential conflicts in diversity. This proves that tolerance is not only an abstract concept, but can evolve into a tradition of community life when managed with the right policies, strategies, and practices.

## 2. Maintaining Religious Harmony

Interreligious harmony is a state where people of different religions live together peacefully, respecting each other's beliefs while freely practicing their own (Huda et al., 2020; Muda & Suharyanto, 2020). Religious harmony is built on recognizing and appreciating religious diversity, creating an environment where differences are not only accepted but also respected (Hannase, Hamzah, Akbar, & Zahran, 2024). In Tolerance Village, this harmony is maintained through three main approaches. First, government policies that support social harmony. Second, the active role of religious leaders, and third, the application of ideal principles taught by each religion.

First, through government policies. Religious harmony in Tolerance Village, Balonggede Village, is inseparable from the support of government policies, such as the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religion and the Minister of Home Affairs Number 8 and 9 of 2006 concerning guidelines for maintaining

religious harmony, empowerment of the Religious Harmony Forum, and the establishment of houses of worship. The Tolerance Village Program initiated by the Bandung City Government aims to foster mutual respect, understanding, and trust among religious communities amid diversity. As stated by the Mayor of Bandung, Yana Mulyana, "The city government has established tolerance villages across five districts to ensure peace and security for the community in practicing their religion" (Wamad, 2022). Previously, Bandung was included among the ten most intolerant cities (Setara Institute, 2015), but thanks to the Kampung Toleransi program, this image has been successfully improved (Setara Institute, 2021). Support also comes from the Balonggede Village Government, which actively holds meetings with religious leaders to maintain the existence of the Tolerance Village. Teguh Setiadi, a local government staff member, explained, "We, as the village government, always strive to preserve and nurture the diversity within our community. One way we do this is by regularly organizing meetings with religious leaders. In these meetings, we engage in discussions, share perspectives, and find solutions together when challenges arise. Essentially, we want to ensure that Tolerance Village remains a safe and comfortable place for people of all religions." (Teguh Setiadi, Interview, April 13, 2023).

The local government and community also practice inclusive participation by involving Chinese-Indonesian residents in neighborhood administrative roles (RT/RW), social activities, and other community events. Ahmad Ridwan, the Head of RW 04, emphasized, "In Tolerance Village, every resident has equal rights to participate in various activities, including in the RT/RW administration. There is no discrimination based on ethnicity or religion. What we prioritize is togetherness and how we can live side by side while supporting one another." (Ahmad Ridwan, Interview, April 15, 2023). This is strengthened by collaboration between the government, religious leaders, and the community that creates harmony through a trilogy of harmony: internal harmony of religious people, harmony between religious

people, and harmony between religious people and the government (Dodego & Witro, 2020; Saehu & Muchtar, 2023). Anton Muljana, a Buddhist religious leader, highlighted the crucial role of the government in maintaining harmony in Tolerance Village. He stated, "The government plays a significant role in ensuring that religious harmony is preserved. Without fair and wise policies, it would be difficult to build a peaceful environment. Here, the government actively communicates with religious leaders and the community, ensuring that differences are addressed with a cool head. This is what allows Tolerance Village to continue thriving in harmony." (Anton Muljana, Interview, April 10, 2023). With fair and wise policies, the Tolerance Village has succeeded in building a harmonious, safe, and peaceful society, becoming a concrete example of how religious harmony can be a way to live together.

Second, through religious figures. Religious leaders have an important role in promoting tolerance and mutual understanding between religious communities in the Tolerance Village. The analysis shows that they play two main roles, namely internal and external roles. Internally, religious leaders play a role in teaching their followers to respect each other and to accept differences. Julius, a Christian religious leader, explained, "At Kalam Kudus Church, pastors always emphasize the teachings of love. They teach that love should be given to everyone, not only to fellow Christians but also to anyone, regardless of religious differences. Jesus taught us that we must love and respect one another." (Julius, Interview, April 19, 2023).

Additionally, the external role of religious leaders is crucial in fostering social harmony. Teguh Setiadi, a local government staff member, highlighted the importance of religious leaders in maintaining harmony, especially among the majority group. He stated, "Religious leaders, particularly from the majority group, have a significant responsibility in promoting unity. They must act as bridges that protect minority groups and foster a moderate understanding. If religious leaders adopt an open mindset, their followers will also develop a more inclusive way of thinking." (Teguh Setiadi, Interview, April 13,

2023). From these interviews, it can be concluded that religious leaders play a central role in creating and maintaining harmony in Tolerance Village. By promoting teachings of love, unity, and openness, they become key figures in building a peaceful and harmonious society.

Externally, religious leaders from Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity hold dialogues and socialization efforts to foster friendship and harmony. Anton Muljana, a Buddhist religious leader, stated, "In this dialogue, we aim to equip the community with the understanding that differences are not a threat. Instead, they are a part of life that should be accepted with an attitude of mutual respect." (Anton Muljana, Interview, April 10, 2023). Regular meetings held by religious leaders also show that differences in beliefs are not a barrier to building good relations and harmony in the community. Religious leaders in the Tolerance Village play three important functions: providing education that builds character and humanity, providing enlightenment to accept diversity, and creating cultures and habits that emphasize unity and harmony amid differences.

Third, through the ideal principle. Religious harmony in Tolerance Village is realized thanks to ideal principles derived from religious teachings. As mentioned earlier, every religious figure provides the public with the importance of respecting, respecting, and loving fellow humans, as well as staying away from violence and crime. These noble values are found in every religious teaching. In Buddhism, it teaches the importance of life balance between humans and nature, which creates order in ecosystems and life. In Christianity, compassion is the core, teaching humans to love each other. Meanwhile, in Islamic teachings, there is the concept of *habluminallah* (the relationship between man and God), which requires obedience to all His provisions, as well as *habluminannas* (the relationship between man and others), which emphasizes kindness towards fellow humans.

In Buddhism, there are four sublime attitudes taught by the Buddha that are believed to support a peaceful and harmonious life. These attitudes are known as *Brahmavihâras* (sublime

attitudes, literally meaning “abodes of Brahma”), which are the four principal virtues in Buddhist teachings and meditation practices mentioned in *Digha Nikaya-13* of the *Pali Tipitaka*. The four sublime attitudes are *Loving-Kindness* (Pâli: *mettâ*, Sanskrit: *maitrî*), *Compassion* (Pâli and Sanskrit: *karuGâ*), *Sympathetic Joy* (Pâli and Sanskrit: *muditâ*), and *Equanimity* (Pâli: *upekkhâ*, Sanskrit: *upekcâ*) (Ashath, 2021). These four attitudes are the foundation for a life filled with love, empathy, joy, and balance, fostering harmony in society. In Christianity, the Lord Jesus teaches to love and cherish others, as it is written in Matthew 22:39: “*And the second commandment, which is the same as that, is: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*” (Peyton, 2024). This verse emphasizes the importance of loving one another as one loves oneself. In addition, many other teachings in the Bible emphasize the value of compassion.

Meanwhile, in Islamic teachings, harmony between religious communities is based on the concept of *rahmatan lil ‘alamin*, which means compassion for all mankind and the universe, with the foundation of sincerity. The Qur’an also provides guidelines on harmony between religious communities, as written in Surah Al-Balad verse 17: “*And he (not) among those who believe and advise each other to be patient and to advise each other to be compassionate*”. Likewise in Surah An-Nur verse 22 which means:

“And do not let those who have advantages and spaciousness among you swear that they will not give (help) to their relatives, the poor, and those who migrate in the way of Allah, and let them forgive and be open-hearted.”

The teachings of harmony and affection between religious communities contained in every religion in the Tolerance Village are always implemented by the community in daily life. This is also inseparable from the role of religious leaders who consistently convey soothing religious teachings. This can be seen from the statements of the religious leaders interviewed. Anton Muljana, a Buddhist religious leader, explained, “Every time we hold a *puja bhakti* (prayer service), the Bhikkhus always emphasize the importance of peace and

virtuous behavior. Buddha’s teachings are very clear—life should be filled with kindness, compassion, and mutual respect. Especially in terms of diversity, we are taught to accept differences with an open heart and a clear mind. This way, there is no conflict or hatred—only harmony.” (Anton Muljana, Interview, April 10, 2023). Julius, a Christian religious leader, stated, “In church, our pastors teach us to remain steadfast in our faith in Jesus Christ. However, they also teach us to be inclusive, to understand differences, and to show love to everyone, regardless of their religion or background. This is the message of love that Jesus Christ has given us.” (Julius, Interview, April 19, 2023).

A similar principle is taught by Islamic religious leaders in Kampung Toleransi. They instill values of peace and harmony in the community. Ari Dinoto, a Muslim religious leader, explained, “As the majority, our responsibility is not only to practice our faith but also to maintain peace. Islam teaches *rahmatan lil alamin*, meaning mercy for all. That is why in Kampung Toleransi, Muslims live in harmony and mutual respect with others.” (Ari Dinoto, Interview, April 14, 2023). A concrete example of this teaching can be seen in the actions of Habib Syarif. With his wisdom and kindness, he not only spreads messages of peace but also actively supports interfaith harmony. One such example is when he warmly welcomed and assisted in the establishment of a place of worship for Buddhists in Kampung Toleransi. This act reflects how Islamic values are truly implemented in daily life.

In addition to the ideal principles of religious teachings, religious harmony in the Tolerance Village is also supported by social principles, namely the Tolerance Village Pledge agreed upon by the three religions in the village. The pledge contains three important points as a joint guide: (1) We are aware that, we live among cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity within the framework of the Republic of Indonesia. Diversity is a blessing diversity is a source of strength. Therefore, we are determined to maintain this diversity by maintaining and maintaining tolerance between cultures, ethnicities, and religions in social life. This can



create rapidity and unity in the Balonggede Village area, Regol District, Bandung City. (2) We are aware that tolerance is very important in the social order of life, to maintain unity and cohesion. For the smooth development of supra structures and infrastructure in our region. (3) We are ready to make this earth a common home, which must be taken care of together. A peaceful, tolerant, safe, and comfortable home to support the city of Bandung to become a superior, prosperous, and religious city.

Inter-religious harmony in Tolerance Village, Balonggede Village, is a model for social integration that combines government policies, the role of religious leaders, and the application of ideal values from each religion as the main pillar. Government policies, such as the Kampung Toleransi program and the empowerment of the Religious Harmony Forum, show the importance of regulations that support social harmony. Government support also creates inclusivity, for example, through the involvement of Chinese citizens in the social structure of RT/RW. The role of religious leaders is the key to instilling the values of mutual respect and love, both through internal education to their people and interfaith dialogue that emphasizes that differences are a gift, not a threat. On the other hand, the ideal principles derived from religious teachings, such as compassion in Christianity, balance in Buddhism, and *rahmatan lil 'alamin* in Islam, form the basis of the ethics of diversity applied in daily life. The Tolerance Village Pledge, as a form of shared commitment by residents, strengthens harmony by emphasizing the importance of unity in diversity and collective responsibility in creating a peaceful environment. The synergy between policies, religious leaders, and ideal principles results in harmony that is not only a tradition but also a way of life that can inspire other regions to build tolerance and diversity.

### **C. Forms of Social Interaction of the Tolerance Village Community**

Simmel argues that society consists of individuals who interact with each other through the exchange of ideas and feelings.

These interactions are not only limited to oral or media communication, but also include social contact, either directly or indirectly. According to Simmel, interaction occurs only if there is a reciprocal relationship between community members, rather than one-sided actions. He also divides the forms of social interaction into two, namely superordination (domination by a stronger party) and subordination (obedience to the dominating party) (Johnson, 1994). These forms, according to him, form a real pattern of social relations in society.

#### **1. Subordination under an individual and group structure**

Simmel showed that superordination (domination) and subordination (obedience) have a mutually influencing relationship (Smelser, 2023). For example, a leader can anticipate responses from his subordinates, both positive and negative responses that tend to be rebellious. This interaction will continue as long as the dominating party does not eliminate the independence of the individual so that the individual can still express his opinion even if he cannot take over the role of leader. This is also reflected in the Tolerance Village, which consists of people of various religions such as Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism. In this diversity, the potential conflicts that often arise in several regions in Indonesia do not occur. This is due to the wise leadership role of the Balonggede Village Head, who has succeeded in maintaining harmony and peace among religious communities. The Head of Balonggede Village can bring his community to live with mutual respect and coexistence peacefully, even in an environment with adjacent places of worship. As expressed by Buddhist religious leader Anton Muljana, "The creation of religious harmony in Kampung Toleransi is inseparable from the role of the local government of Balonggede Village, which is wise, fair, and upholds religious harmony. If the government chooses to act poorly, of course, they could do so because they have the authority. But this is not the case. That's why I say that the government plays a very important role in creating harmony in the Village of Tolerance." (Anton Muljana, Interview, April 10, 2023).

The local government plays a major role in building strong social interaction among religious communities in the Tolerance Village. This interaction is realized through various activities such as cooperation, social services, the implementation of national events, and general elections, which involve all elements of society regardless of religious differences. This activity creates a space for mutual communication, cooperation, and mutual influence, as explained by Simmel that social interaction can only be formed when there is a mutual relationship between the leader and the leader. With this approach, the local government has succeeded in maintaining harmony amid existing diversity.

The wise leadership approach of the Balonggede Village Head shows a deep understanding of the mutual relationship between the leader and the led, as explained by Simmel in the concept of superordination and subordination. The government not only carries out administrative duties, but also plays a role as the main facilitator in creating an inclusive and harmonious space for social interaction in the Tolerance Village. Through joint activities such as community service, social service, and national holiday celebrations, the government opens interfaith communication spaces that strengthen togetherness between citizens. This is in line with the principle that leadership that does not suppress individual freedom will result in cooperative obedience rather than resistance. A just government that supports religious harmony not only prevents conflict, but also encourages people to respect and appreciate each other. In this way, the government has succeeded in making diversity a strength in building a peaceful, mutually supportive, and harmonious social life in the Tolerance Village.

## 2. Subordination under more than one person

The second approach aims to create equitable justice for all parties with the principle of objectivity. In the context of democracy, the decision of the majority is decisive, but the rights of minorities are still respected to safeguard the common interest. This is reflected in the life of the people of Kampung Toleransi who are

heterogeneous in religion. Despite their differences in beliefs, the interaction between them remains harmonious, safe, and comfortable. This condition is linked to the role of religious leaders who teach and exemplify good relation with people across different religions. Religious leaders, such as Ustad for Muslims, Bikhu for Buddhists, and Pastors for Christians, convey a soothing understanding, providing the community with role models when addressing issues related to religion. In this case, the subordinate (society) approaches the superordinate (religious leaders) as support to obtain a better understanding (Johnson, 1988).

In addition, the interaction between religious leaders in the Tolerance Village is very good and harmonious. They often hold dialogues and invite each other to various events, such as Thanksgiving held by Habib Syarif, Chairman of the As-Salam Foundation, who also invited Father Anton. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, cooperation between religious leaders was also evident, for example when the Church through Father Anton provided free vaccines for 50 Buddhists. This concrete example is a reference for the community in establishing harmonious relations between religious communities. With good interaction between superordinates, the subordinate situation will be more conducive (Johnson, 1988).

The harmonious life in the Tolerance Village shows how the role of religious leaders as superordinates can build an inclusive pattern of social interaction amid religious diversity. Religious leaders not only serve as role models in providing a soothing understanding of religion but also initiate interfaith dialogue and cooperation, reflecting wisdom-based leadership and respect for universal values. The synergy among religious leaders creates a conducive interaction space, where the community as subordinates can learn from their example to live a life of mutual respect and cooperation in various social aspects, such as vaccination during the pandemic. This approach is in line with Johnson's (1988) idea that a harmonious relationship between superordinates can have a positive impact on

subordinates, creating conditions that favor a peaceful and just social life. Therefore, the presence of proactive religious leaders dedicated to maintaining interfaith harmony is a key element in realizing a harmonious, safe, and prosperous social life in the Tolerance Village.

### 3. Subordination under the ideal principle

Ideal principles can be understood as norms or laws that serve as guidelines for action and function to limit arbitrary behavior by those in dominant positions within society. In the Tolerance Village, religious norms form the foundational basis for building harmonious social interactions amidst religious diversity. The Muslim majority practices the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*—compassion for all humankind—by providing space, freedom, and respect for the presence of other religions, such as Christianity and Buddhism. In Christian teachings, love is the core of religious life, expressed through concrete acts of helping others. Meanwhile, Buddhism emphasizes the principle of *Majjhima Patipada*, which advocates balance, harmony, and the avoidance of harmful actions. These three religious teachings serve as moral foundations that foster positive and respectful interfaith relations within the Tolerance Village.

Religious norms embedded in the collective consciousness of the people of Tolerance Village serve as fundamental guidelines for maintaining harmony and fostering positive interactions among religious communities. These norms are reinforced by social regulations in the form of the Tolerance Village Pledge, which was mutually agreed upon as a collective commitment. As previously cited, the Tolerance Village Pledge reflects the community's determination to uphold the values of tolerance, unity, and shared development. This commitment serves as a key element in promoting social stability amidst the diversity of cultures, ethnicities, and religions. The pledge not only represents the internalized religious and social norms of the community, but also illustrates a critical awareness of the importance of peaceful coexistence within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

Therefore, the Tolerance Village Pledge functions as a strategic social instrument for managing diversity and fostering inclusive and sustainable social integration.

The Pledge of the Tolerance Village and the religious norms that guide the community reflect how ideal principles can be realized in daily life amid diversity. The success of the Tolerance Village community in creating a harmonious environment shows the importance of a collective commitment to universal values such as tolerance, compassion, and mutual respect. Religious norms serve as moral pillars that guide both individual and group actions, while joint pledges serve as social bonds that strengthen unity amidst differences. This inclusive approach not only maintains interfaith harmony but also strengthens social stability, supports development, and creates a conducive environment for all parties. This is a clear example that social harmony can be achieved through synergy between religious norms and mutually agreed upon social rules.

### 4. Subordination and individual freedom

In social relations, subordinate groups often experience pressure due to interaction patterns that place them under the dominance of superordinate groups. Movements that seek to achieve equality emerge as a response to such inequalities, aiming to ensure equal rights, including the right to lead. Although, according to Simmel, social differences are a natural part of human life and perfect equality is difficult to attain, healthy social relationships can help alleviate the pressures faced by subordinate groups. One effort to achieve this is by separating individual identity from social position, and by fostering reciprocal relationships that allow for role rotation between superordinates and subordinates. The implementation of democratic elections and leadership transitions are concrete examples of such rotation.

In the Tolerance Village, the interaction between the government as a superordinate entity and the community as a subordinate group was positive. The government implements policies that ensure all people, whether Muslims, Christians, or Buddhists,

have the same rights and freedoms to occupy a superordinate position within the social structure. As expressed by Rusman the head of RW 05, "Not only do we have the right and freedom to practice our religion, but all people, whether Muslim, Christian, or Buddhist, are not discriminated against here. Everyone has the right to participate in governmental structures, whether at the RT (Neighborhood Association), RW (Community Association), or Kelurahan (urban village) level. The government encourages the involvement of individuals from all religious and ethnic backgrounds in these administrative structures (Rusman, Interview, April 7, 2023). The implementation of inclusive policies in the Tolerance Village shows that the relationship between superordination and subordination can run harmoniously if it is based on equality and justice. The government as a superordinate does not impose oppressive domination but rather encourages active participation from all elements of society, including religious minorities. This pattern of interaction reflects Simmel's idea of a reciprocal relationship between superordinates and subordinates, where subordinates have the opportunity to fill the position of superordinates in a given context. These policies not only create a just social structure but also strengthen social cohesion in diverse societies.

#### **D. Inhibiting Factors for Harmonious Social Interaction in Tolerance Villages**

Although Kampung Toleransi is widely recognized as a symbol of religious diversity and interfaith harmony, observations and interviews with informants indicate that the community still faces various practical challenges in everyday life. One major issue is the presence of egoistic religious attitudes, where some residents interpret their religious teachings narrowly and express them in public without considering the broader social context. Acts such as promoting exclusive religious truths or using religious symbols in shared spaces can cause discomfort among others. Another challenge is the presence of "passive tolerance," where some residents avoid deep interfaith engagement. These individuals

usually attend only formal events and do not actively participate in everyday communal activities, leading to shallow and emotionally distant relationships.

Religious fanaticism passed down without critical thinking is also a serious concern. A rigid and context-free understanding of religion can create an exclusive mindset that separates groups into "us" and "them," increasing social distance and reducing mutual understanding. This form of fanaticism can lead to stereotypes and prejudice, weakening social bonds across religious identities. However, these issues can be addressed through inclusive religious education, active participation in interfaith programs, and promoting values like tolerance and respect for differences in daily life. Religious leaders, government institutions, and the wider community all have important roles in creating fair and harmonious social interactions. These findings show that harmony in Kampung Toleransi is not something that happens automatically, but rather something that must be built through ongoing dialogue, adaptation, and community involvement. Strengthening inclusive education, promoting interfaith dialogue, and encouraging active civic participation are essential steps to achieving lasting social harmony.

#### **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that the success of Kampung Toleransi in Balonggede in fostering religious harmony results from inclusive social interactions, wise leadership, and the implementation of religious values that emphasize compassion, balance, and tolerance. Religious and social diversity, which has the potential to create conflict, is instead managed as a source of strength in building unity. The support of religious leaders, fair and inclusive government policies, and active community involvement in interfaith activities contribute to forming a harmonious and sustainable pattern of social interaction. Simmel's theory of subordination and superordination proves relevant in explaining the relationship between the government, religious leaders, and the community in creating stable and peaceful

social synergy.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the social interaction model in Kampung Toleransi be adopted in other regions while adapting to local policies and community social structures. Local governments can strengthen similar programs by establishing interfaith forums that actively engage in dialogue and joint social activities. From an academic perspective, further research can explore social dynamics in multicultural communities across different regions in Indonesia to identify specific factors influencing the success of social integration. With the right approach, the concept of Kampung Toleransi can serve as an inspiration for managing diversity harmoniously at local, national, and global levels.

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