Religious and Cultural Diversity in Indonesia: Dynamics of Acceptance and Conflict in a Multidimensional Perspective

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ABSTRACT: This study delves into the intricate relationship between religion and cultural diversity and the implementation of religious moderation policies to mitigate conflict potential in Indonesia. Based on a dataset of 1,000 samples distributed across 34 provinces, the findings reveal that newly implemented religious moderation policies can reduce conflict potential by 4.2%. Interestingly, the study also unveils that solidarity and appreciation for local culture have a limited impact on curbing conflict potential while simultaneously giving rise to new forms of collective narcissism. These findings underscore that high acceptance of religious and cultural diversity does not necessarily translate into lower conflict potential. Addressing the underlying issues of national solidarity emerges as a critical challenge that must be confronted to safeguard social harmony in Indonesia.

KEYWORDS: Cultural Diversity, Conflict Potential, Religious Acceptance, Religious Moderation, Solidarity.

INTRODUCTION

The diversity of a community's resources depends on the composition of its population. (Boone et al. 2012). Indonesia is considered intriguing because it possesses 7,508 islands, home to over 300 distinct ethnic groups. In addition, that country also consists of 1,340 ethnic groups who speak more than 1,001 different languages. The current diversity encompasses six officially recognized religions by the state, namely Islam as the predominant religion, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. According to UNESCO (2001), the plurality can bring positive potential in improving the economic sector and help support the development of individuals' intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual well-being. (Lee 2022). Religious diversity is widely acknowledged as a significant economic and social activity catalyst.

Nevertheless, the wide range of differences cannot be disentangled from the social challenges and possible discord. Increased variety levels correlate with a higher likelihood of conflict and the emergence of societal problems. (Bai et al. 2020).

Historical records show Indonesia's remarkable endeavor to unify many ethnic groups, cultures, languages, and faiths, resulting in a robust national unity under the guiding principle of 'Unity in Diversity.' The genesis of that episode may be traced back to Dutch colonial rule, where an attempt was made to fragment Indonesian society through the implementation of the *'divide et impera'* plan. Furthermore, the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) gangs introduced the influence of communism during the period from 1920 to 1965. Moreover, the nation had to confront multiple uprisings from different regions, seeking independence from the Republic of Indonesia and striving to build a sovereign entity based on their specific ethnic and religious identities. Consequently, the country has endured political, social, and economic instability for several decades.

Religious solidarity is essential in maintaining religious harmony and peace between people (Sintang et al., 2022), (Luqman & Ilhamdi, 2023). The word 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika,' displayed on the ribbon beneath the Garuda bird, the national emblem of Indonesia, serves as a symbol of togetherness and a means of bringing together diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. That phrase cultivates and imbues nationalism in every individual, regardless of experience. Over time, the promotion of diversity through nationalism can paradoxically lead to a homogenization that diminishes religious and cultural differences. Multiple studies have determined the Bhinneka Tunggal Ika needs to establish a clear definition of unity, resulting in its inability to handle variety effectively. The lack of management has contributed to the occurrence of social conflicts, secession movements, and acts of terror (Abdullah, 2003), (Atasoge, 2018), (Hamoes, 2020). It is reflected in several situations: (1) the state actively promotes its varied population to embrace one of the six religions officially acknowledged by the state. (2) The state mandates the utilization of the Indonesian language by all ethnic groups, resulting in the erosion of their ethnic distinctiveness. (3) The state grants benefits to prevailing religious or ethnic groups, thus inciting prejudices and bigotry. That situation has caused several tribes, ethnicities, and

minority areas to experience radical changes, leading to challenging circumstances and the emergence of opposition. They form religious or ethnic groupings when solidarity emerges from shared similarities and is used to carry out acts of resistance. Excluding individuals based on ethnicity or religion can generate tensions with other groups. It can foster intolerant confrontations, notably between religious beliefs and ethnic customs. The political arena frequently capitalizes on that potential conflict by manipulating the identity of politics.

Identity politics is still a significant issue in Indonesian elections. In the 2017 DKI Jakarta Regional Head Election (Pilkada), identity politics was utilized to discredit the incumbent, a Chinese-Christian ethnic minority, against ethnic Arab-Islamic descendants. That incident shows the political manipulation of ethnic and religious identities. Religion justifies regime change, norms, and behavior. (Alcoff and Mohanty 2006). Religious solidarity is crucial in promoting the achievement of a more inclusive essence of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. Consequently, the government has implemented a strategy to promote a culture that aligns with the country's identity, as outlined in the state development mission in the 2020-2024 RPJMN. More precisely, the responsibility for implementing that mandate was assigned to the Indonesian Ministry of Religion, tasked with executing it through a policy approach known as 'religious moderation.'

The research examines the policies of religious moderation implemented in recent years and their impact on fostering religious solidarity in Indonesia. It also aids in determining the level of conflict that may arise and the level of acceptance of cultural diversity by religious groups. One can attentively monitor these through active engagement in socio-political affairs. Examining the direction of social change and emergent conflict tendencies towards societal pluralism necessitates an accommodating approach to cultural diversity and an appreciation of local culture. Particularly for believers progressively assimilating into local culture, this research contributes to a more comprehensive comprehension of the values of religious solidarity. It facilitates the formulation of policies that promote religious moderation.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Bhinneka Tunggal Ika and Religious Moderation

"Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" originates from the book 'Sutasoma' by Mpu Tantular, written during the 14th century Majapahit Kingdom. The inscription is shown on a ribbon that is grasped by the Garuda bird, which serves as the emblem of the Indonesian nation. The concept aims to raise awareness of the inherent interdependence of humanity, highlighting the necessity for social contact, cooperation, and mutual tolerance among individuals. In addition, variety serves as a reminder of the various ethnic groups within our society, necessitating a heightened awareness to uphold and safeguard mutual respect and preservation.

Protection of variety receives substantial attention from the government, as stated in Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution, which ensures the freedom of each inhabitant to practice their religion. UNHCR Resolution 16/16 encompasses various objectives, including promoting and encouraging respect for religion and culture. Indonesia fervently backs and endeavors to counteract intolerance, negative stereotypes, stigmatization, and discrimination, both against individuals and beliefs. Of course, collaborative efforts are vital in pursuing the objective. In that context, the government is pivotal in promoting religious freedom and preventing discrimination rooted in religion or culture. Hence, following Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution, the government, under the 2020-2024 National Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMN), particularly in the Development mission, the President and Vice President have devised a cultural promotion initiative that embodies the essence of the nation's character.

The program was subsequently codified as Law Number 5 of 2017, explicitly outlined in Article 3 letter b. The provision emphasizes the development of cultural diversity by acknowledging and preserving distinctions in ethnicity, race, religion, and belief (Kemendikbudristek, 2017)[1]. In addition, the government has implemented regulations about the responsibility for maintaining peaceful conditions in society, as outlined in Law Number 7 of 2012, which addresses the management of social conflicts. The article emphasizes the importance of the government adopting a mindset of tolerance and mutual respect toward the freedom to practice religion and beliefs (a). It also highlights the need to respect differences in ethnicity, language, and customs of others (b).

Furthermore, the article emphasizes recognizing and treating all individuals with dignity and respect (c). Additionally, it stresses the importance of recognizing equality, rights, and human obligations for everyone regardless of ethnicity, descent, religion, gender, social position, or skin color (d). The article also emphasizes the importance of respecting differing opinions (e) and fostering

the values of Indonesian unity based on diversity (ke-Bhinneka Tunggal ika-an), referring to the Indonesian Ministry of Defense in 2012.

Subsequently, the Indonesian Ministry of Religion was entrusted with implementing the mandate, which was later formalized in Minister of Religion Regulation Number 18 of 2020, outlining the Strategic Plan of the Indonesian Ministry of Religion. The issuance of a 'religious moderation policy' was aimed at enhancing religious peace and fostering amicable interactions between different religions and cultures, as mandated by the Indonesian Ministry of Religion in 2020.

Religious moderation refers to a religious worldview or attitude that is open, moderate, and inclusive. The term is derived from the Arabic word *'Al wasathiyah- Wasatha,'* which denotes an intermediary position between two opposing parties, associated explicitly with equity, justice, equilibrium, or conciliator concepts. According to the hadith, the most ideal situation or matter is the one that falls in the middle. Religious moderation is a balanced approach to addressing the challenge of religious and cultural diversity in Indonesia. Indonesia's strategy emphasizes cultural diversity by consistently adopting a moderate approach. The middle method, as outlined by the Indonesian Ministry of Religion, consists of four fundamental elements: (1) national commitment, (2) religious and cultural tolerance, (3) non-violence, and (4) adaptability to local culture. The policy is manifested through diverse manifestations of attitudes, communication, and recognition, which are conveyed through a range of multicultural education initiatives in schools, inter-religious dialogues, seminars, inter-religious collaborations facilitated by the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB), anti-radicalism campaigns, and similar endeavors.

Religious moderation can be observed in the widespread acceptance of religious and cultural diversity. That acceptance has seamlessly integrated into cultural traditions, such as the *'Basandi Syarak, Basandi Kitabullah*' Custom' in West Sumatra and the principle of *'Adati halo-hula to Sana'a, sara'a halo-hula to kitabi*' in Gorontalo Province. The principle asserts that customs should align with the Shari'a, and the Shari'a should adhere to the teachings found in the sacred books. Tradition and sharia serve as a harmonious equilibrium in that environment, embodying the fundamental idea of religious moderation. Religious moderation in a cultural setting is seen in transmitting local knowledge values as traditional practices, exemplified by the 'one Suro tradition' observed in Javanese villages. The ritual keeps the commencement of the new year in the Javanese calendar, the beginning of Muharram in the Islamic calendar, and the reception of the Saka new year in the Hindu/Buddhist tradition. Religious communities of different faiths demonstrate mutual respect in their implementation. For instance, Buddhists and Muslims observe a day-long fast until the evening preceding a Suro, after which they partake in communal meals and embark on pilgrimages to the tombs of their forefathers.

The ultimate goal of promoting moderation by enhancing religious solidarity and harmony is outlined through three strategic objectives: (1) enhancing the comprehension and application of religious teachings, (2) fostering religious moderation and cultural harmony, and (3) promoting harmony in religious and cultural interactions. (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019). The primary emphasis of that study lies on the third point, explicitly highlighting the variables related to the amount of cultural unity and conflict reduction.

Solidarity and Tolerance in religious-cultural Complexity

Human beings rely on solidarity and cooperation with others to sustain their life. Durkheim's 2011 thesis, 'The Division of Labor in Society,' introduced his idea of social solidarity, which pertained to the connections between individuals or groups founded on emotional morality and shared beliefs. (Leeden and Abdullah, 1986)The values mentioned are typically observed in rural areas and were referred to by Durkheim as mechanical solidarity. In urban societies, the prevailing values are characterized by a division of labor not influenced by emotional values or organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity is based on shared principles that arise from mutual trust. Social solidarity is the formation of alliances based on commonalities in views, religion, ethnicity, and culture.

According to Durkheim, solidarity arises due to significant instability, which compels society to compromise and collectively assume responsibility to restore normalcy. (Alfirdaus et al., 2015). According to Jagiełło (2023), Particular perspectives see solidarity as an indication of mutual responsibilities in social and economic interactions. Solidarity is acknowledging the well-being of others as equivalent to one's well-being, hence contributing to the collective well-being. (Carl et al., 2021). Solidarity can be categorized into six distinct levels of sentiment: effectual, associative, consensus, functional, normative, and structural solidarity. (Fragoso et al., 2023; Preoteasa et al., 2018). Fragoso (2023) posits that structural solidarity has the potential to impact functional solidarity about the exchange of support and distribution of resources. In turn, it can contribute to reinforcing the social inequality marginalized groups face in the region. The focus lies on the socio-economic circumstances and social disadvantages experienced by these groups. That phenomenon can manifest in connections that permit differences and discrepancies between the parties

involved. (Timonen et al., 2013), such as in relationships between rural and urban areas, parents and young people, employers and workers, and relationships between various religions and cultures.

Suppose we define solidarity as a type of emotional reciprocal assistance. In that case, tolerance may be seen as the capacity to embrace divergences, perspectives, or conduct of others without seeing any sense of intimidation or criticism. (Soekanto, 2017). Tolerance fosters social cohesion, enhances interpersonal or collective comprehension, promotes productive discourse and communication, establishes fairness and parity, and cultivates an all-encompassing atmosphere. (Hjerm et al., 2020). There is a prevailing belief that individuals must first encounter disagreement or hate to become lenient, forgiving, and accepting eventually. According to Hjerm, two fundamental factors contribute to people's tolerance: firstly, the recognition and overcoming of past negative biases, and secondly, the ability to subsequently tolerate those biases. Secondly, tolerance can be defined as the capacity to endure or accept something. Tolerance can be defined as a broad mindset that does not hold unfavorable attitudes towards external groups. Individuals may acknowledge diversity without necessarily valuing it. (Verkuyten et al., 2020). Alternatively, individuals may recognize diversity without fully embracing or endorsing it. (Insel, 2019). Tolerance can be understood as a value system that promotes acceptance, respect, and appreciation for diversity.

In religion and culture, tolerance refers to the willingness to acknowledge, honor, and appreciate the divergences in religious and cultural beliefs. Solidarity entails a willingness to offer cooperation based on shared interests in religious and cultural diversity. Religion, therefore, serves as the foundation for a robust sense of unity. Shared philosophy and faith will promote mutual recognition and cultivate trust, ultimately forming solidarity. Indeed, a heightened sense of solidarity can surpass nationalistic sentiments. (Jalaluddin, 2010).

The ongoing discussion about whether religion is a cultural creation or vice versa is not recent. Religion is commonly defined as a belief system centered around the existence of a divine creator, such as God. Conversely, culture originated because of human innovations transmitted over successive generations. The interplay between religion and culture mutually impacts one another in various ways (Rosenberg, 2017). Religion and culture mutually enhance one another, establishing the ethical principles, standards, and customs that govern daily existence. Every religious belief system shows a structured set of moral principles and ideals that influence the conduct of individuals and communities. Conversely, culture serves as a means for religious manifestation, giving rise to artistic creations, architectural structures, and customs that enhance the religious encounter. Nevertheless, sociologists and anthropologists commonly associate religion with culture, regarding religion as an inherent aspect of cultural identity that influences beliefs, values, and practices, reflecting the interconnection between the two.

Religious narratives are represented through several visual components, including paintings, symbols, and sculptures. These visual depictions foster fortitude and enhance cultural heritage, fostering societal cohesion. For example, Hinduism is steeped in rich rituals, festivals, and traditions, while Christianity has celebrations and Christmas trees, and pilgrimages, fasting, and holiday celebrations characterize Islam. All of that contributes to the complexity of global culture.

Religious practitioners perceive religion as a belief system that possesses an inherent truth, distinct from traditional values. There is disagreement on whether religious studies or sacred texts from their books may be considered equivalent to literary works of cultural science. Religious ideals are disseminated through several means, in different languages, and within various cultural contexts. However, the level of devotion varies among individuals, leading to many interpretations of religion. These religious sects, such as Sunni and Shia in Islam or Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox in Christianity, emerged due to different factors.

Discussions surrounding religious interpretations create opportunities for secular groups to act as intermediaries. Nevertheless, in Indonesia, secularism is now confined to individuals who perceive religion as compatible with societal advancement. That viewpoint is seen as posing a threat to the Islamic faith. Indeed, the current situation resembles historical instances where eminent scientists like Galileo and Copernicus were discredited by the church for contradicting religious doctrines, leading to their persecution. Some Muslims in Indonesia perceive the concept of 'Islam Nusantara' as a form of secularism.

Islam Nusantara is considered to violate the Shari'a and actual Islamic rules because, for them, Islam does not need to be converted to the archipelago; in fact, the archipelago must be Islamized. Islam is a divine revelation, whereas Indonesia is a creation of humans, so the sacred cannot be subordinated to the profane and particular. (Moqsith, 2016). In that context, Islam Nusantara refers to a moderate Islamic ideology that upholds and values tolerance among individuals. Islam Nusantara embraces indigenous knowledge due to its development in the archipelago's distinct climate, which differs from the environment of the Arabian Peninsula. Islam Nusantara can be described as having a focus on anthropology and sociology, as stated by Yusqi (2015).

On the other hand, the complexity of religion and culture also challenges the concept of sacredness. Cultural elements are sometimes considered sacred simply because they are associated with a particular religion. Muslims frequently designate ordinary objects as sacred by associating them with the moniker 'Islam,' as shown in events that endorse religious affiliations, such as an *'Islamic Party.'* The establishment of Islamic parties, according to Nurcholis Majid (2003), does not always function as a forum for Islamic struggle; sometimes, it can even tarnish the sanctity of Islam because some of its members are involved in corruption (Majid 2008). Ironically, that figure's opinion is considered secular and tarnishes Islam. An analogous occurred within the Indonesian fashion industry with the emergence of the Syar'i robe trend. The term 'Syar'i' serves as a marker for ladies who exhibit devout religious beliefs, and that devoutness is regarded as having a sacred significance. However, it is a fact that a significant number of criminal and prostitution cases involve women who are dressed in Syar'i robes.

In essence, righteousness is ultimately determined by one's conduct rather than solely relying on attire typically associated with a particular culture. Various instances have incited discussions on matters about religion and culture, including topics such as circumcision, women's headscarves, dietary restrictions in Islam and Judaism, and the concept of Islam Nusantara, among others. In addition, according to data from IPSOS Global Religion, approximately 29% of the global population presently identifies as agnostic or atheist. (Ipsos, 2023).

Adherence to a sacred religion can give rise to excessive fanaticism. Religious fanaticism can lead to conflicts with individuals who have different ideas or consider their beliefs superior and more accurate. That fanaticism can, in turn, lead to extremist, intolerant, and radical behavior. Religious fanaticism inside a nation's framework exerts an influence on political determinations that may result in discriminatory actions against other factions, as seen by the Uighur Islamic minority group in China. Uighur Muslims face discriminatory treatment, torture, and forced re-indoctrination, as well as restrictions on their religious practices. The Chinese government actively suppresses Uighur cultural and religious expression. Religious books were banned, the Uighur language was suppressed, and elements of traditional culture were erased or modified to fit the government's desired narrative. That is a concrete example of how state fanaticism towards certain religious groups can lead to human rights violations, suppression of religious freedom, and forced changes to their cultural identity.

Conflict and Acceptance of Religion and Culture

Conceptually, conflict is characterized by misunderstanding or disagreement between two or more people. Religious conflict means a dispute regarding values, claims, and identities involving religious issues. (Henne and Klocek, 2019). Conflict and violence dominate global media and conversation in today's complex globe. Conflict deaths are at an all-time high, threatening world peace. According to the 2023 Global Peace Index (GPI), 84 nations had increased conflict, and 79 saw a decrease. Conflict deaths rose 96% and cost $17.5 trillion, or 13% of global GDP, to global economic stability. Middle East disputes between ethnic and religious groups are profound. Peace efforts are hampered by political instability and population suffering in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Ethnic conflicts and resource warfare in Africa cause instability. Peacebuilding is difficult in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The GPI ranks these countries as the least peaceful after Afghanistan. History shows that the Palestinian state is the least peaceful since the 1917 border dispute with Israel.

What is the current state of religious and cultural conflict in Indonesia? Indonesia is widely recognized for its abundant ethnic, religious, racial, and cultural variety, encompassing 300 ethnicities, 1340 tribes, and 1001 distinct languages. Conflict is inevitable, even within the marital partnership, given the wide range of differences. The most severe war that transpired in Indonesia during the post-reform era was the Ambon conflict in Maluku Province (1999-2003), resulting in the loss of approximately 10 thousand lives. In 2001, a dispute arose between the Kalimantan Dayak tribe and the Madurese tribe in the Sampit district of Central Kalimantan. Four hundred sixty-nine fatalities were recorded in that battle, while 108,000 individuals relocated to alternative regions. Indonesia, being a multicultural country, encounters intricate challenges. On one hand, cultural diversity is viewed as a promising asset for the progress of a sophisticated and refined nation. On the other hand, multiculturalism can also generate dynamics that pose obstacles to achieving societal harmony.

In 2022, a survey conducted by the Setara Institute revealed that Indonesia experienced 508 incidents and transgressions related to religious conflicts. The instances of religious conflict that frequently arise encompass (1) intolerance, (2) hate speech, (3) opposition to the establishment of places of worship, (4) blasphemy against religion, (5) refusal to acknowledge religious practices, (6) acts of violence carried out in the name of religion, and (7) the deliberate destruction of places of worship. The Poso dispute in Central Sulawesi Province occurred from 1998 to 2001 and is the most significant inter-religious conflict in scale. It involved clashes

between Muslim and Christian factions and tragically claimed the lives of 577 individuals. The violence was instigated by the discriminatory economic rivalry between the indigenous Poso population, predominantly Christian and Muslim immigrants. Recently, there have been instances of intolerant disruption of religious gatherings by various community organizations targeting church congregations in Binjai Kota District, North Sumatra Province, Pekanbaru City, Riau, and Cilame Village, Ngamprah, West Bandung Regency. Intolerance is not limited to people of other religions; it also exists among members of the same religion. Religious intolerance exists among adherents of the same religion. In Bireuen Regency, Aceh, a Muhammadiyah recitation hall was burned down despite the region's Muslim majority.

If the attitudes above are driven by political elites and used for their interests, it will become a form of identity politics. Conflicts based on identity politics are often used in election contestations and are still a fundamental problem today. According to Maarif (2010), identity politics arises out of feelings of revenge and hurt over acts of blackmail and the elimination of a group by another dominant group, like Muslims or black people who may have been marginalized economically, politically, and culturally by European nations in the past. Then, when they become dominant, they also do the same thing to other minorities.

In Indonesia, identity politics frequently arises from religious considerations, although it can also stem from other variables such as nationalism, gender, social class, and ethnicity. There have been other instances of identity politics in Indonesia, such as the example of the current Governor of DKI Jakarta. He is an ethnic Chinese and Christian who was accused of religious blasphemy in 2017 and was unsuccessful in the regional head election. During that period, the 212 Movement was formed due to identity politics. That movement aimed to rally Islamic groups and encourage them to participate in street protests against acts of religious blasphemy while voicing support for opponents who were of Arab-Islamic ethnicity.

Before that, there was an occurrence of ethnic strife stemming from anti-Chinese feelings during the fall of the New Order regime in 1998. The perception that ethnic Chinese, who were regarded as non-Muslim, were also believed to exert the most significant influence on the economic sector, particularly in terms of nepotism and corruption practices, led to the most significant wave of racial unrest in history. During that period, numerous establishments and businesses owned by individuals of Chinese descent were subjected to violent outbursts by angry mobs. Regrettably, both property damage and acts of physical violence took place, causing significant harm and even loss of life. Many individuals perceive that event as comparable to the Kristallnacht episode in Germany in 1938, characterized by the systematic persecution and mass killing of Jews orchestrated by the Nazi regime.

Similarly, the clash that transpired in 2017 between the nationalist faction and the Islamic faction Hizbut Tahrir (HTI), which sought to build a Khilafah state governed by Islamic law, is only one example of religious intolerance that has incited conflicts in Indonesia. Nevertheless, none of these disputes were protracted; all were successfully resolved. That is due to the amiable and family-oriented nature of Indonesian culture. In addition, all dispute resolutions are conducted by cultivating a profound affection for the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), guided by the principles of Pancasila, which embodies the concept of unity in diversity (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika).

METHODS

Several religious and cultural conflicts in different parts of Indonesia were thoroughly analyzed using a case study methodology. The goal is to empirically examine events that transpire in actual life situations (Yin, 2013). Additionally, quantitative data was added to the qualitative methodology used to analyze the cases. The dynamics of acceptance and conflict in Indonesia's religious and cultural diversity were investigated using a survey approach. The design was chosen to allow for the collection of broad and representative data from various provinces in Indonesia so that it could produce generalizable findings. The study population consisted of Indonesian citizens who were 17 years of age or older or were married at the time of the survey. The population sample was drawn from 34 provinces in Indonesia to ensure a comprehensive representation of the entire country. The regions were subsequently partitioned into 11 major ethnic groups, encompassing the following ethnicities: The ethnic groups in the region include Chinese, Batak, Minangkabau, Bugis, Madurese, Betawi, Banjar, Malay, Sundanese, Javanese, and various others. Furthermore, various factors such as socio-economic status, income, religious affiliation, educational attainment, and gender encompassed both male and female individuals.

The data collection process was conducted using a stratified random sampling technique of 1000 respondents, ensuring that the sample taken was representative of the broader population based on essential characteristics. The questionnaire utilized a combination of closed and open-ended questions to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. The data collection process

involved conducting interviews to gather information on the extent of religious and cultural diversity and the potential for future conflicts.

Analyzed data were processed using a composite index, enabling the amalgamation of multiple indicators into a comprehensive measure. The purpose of that composite index is to offer a comprehensive representation of the degree of acceptance and conflict within Indonesian society. The analysis was performed utilizing statistical software to guarantee the precision and dependability of the findings. The questionnaire is structured into three distinct components: (1) about fundamental respondent information, (2) concerning the recognition of local culture and the promotion of solidarity towards religious and cultural diversity, and (3) addressing potential conflicts that may arise. From an ethical standpoint, participants are willing to voluntarily engage in research activities, including their dedication to research protocols and terminology. Data collection for documentation is conducted online, encompassing diverse sources such as laws and regulations, government mandates, regional regulations, and decisions made by regents. That integrated methodology can thoroughly comprehend aspects of the objectives of that study. Data for that study was gathered incrementally from May 1 to May 20, 2023. The participants' characteristics can be observed as follows:

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents' Cognitive Population

Variable	Dimensions	Per centage
Gender	Man	50
	Female	50
Marital Status	Single Ethnic and Religious Marriages	91,1
	Marriage of One Ethnicity of Different Religions	0,8
	Marriage between different ethnicities and one religion	7,8
	Inter-Ethnic and Religious Marriages	0,3
Job Status	Employed	77,3
	Unemployed	22,7
Education	Bachelor	11,4
	Non-Graduate	88,6
Religion	Islam	83,5
	Christian	7,8
	Catholic	5,4
	Hindu	2,3
	Buddha	1
Etnicity	Jawa	38,1
	Sunda	16,4
	Madura	3,1
	Batak	4,2
	Minang	1,2
	Betawi	2,2
	Malays and other Sumatera tribes	5,9
	Bugis	2,1
	Bali	2
	Banjar	2,1
	Makassar	2
	Sasak	2
	Aceh	1,9
	Papua	1,7
	Others	15,1

RESULT

Understanding of local culture, values, religion, and language

An extensive comprehension of culture, religious principles, and indigenous languages is crucial for fostering tolerance, collaboration, and assimilation within heterogeneous civilizations. That undermines national cohesion and substantially influences the nation's social, economic, and political dimensions. That comprehension can promote endeavors to uphold one's sense of self and affection for one's nation, promote inclusivity, acceptance, and effective communication, and, most significantly, deter conflicts.

Indonesia's rich assortment of religions and cultures has a profound historical lineage, greatly influencing interactions with neighboring cultures. Throughout antiquity, the Indonesian archipelago has been populated by diverse tribes and ethnicities, each possessing its unique culture, language, and customs. The influence of Hinduism and Buddhism in Indonesia dates back to the 1st century AD, and their development was particularly notable under the reigns of various kingdoms, including the Kutai Martadipura kingdom in Kalimantan, the Sriwijaya kingdom in Sumatra, and the Majapahit kingdom in Java. (Hafizd 2021). Islam's influence began manifesting in the 13th century through trade and the dissemination of da'wah, leading to a profound shift in people's mindset as they embraced the religion.

In addition to religious influences, Indonesian culture was also shaped by the advent of European colonialism from the 16th to the 20th centuries. The Portuguese, Dutch, and Spanish colonialism had a profound impact on the Indonesian government, transforming it from a traditional kingdom into a government modeled after Western-style governance. Moreover, that nation's colonization also introduced the Christianization process to Indonesia. Similarly, during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia, they introduced many cultural influences, which, coupled with advancements in technology and information, led to further intensifying cultural value transformations. An equally significant aspect of that diversification process is the speed at which migrant movements occur, rapidly altering local cultural identities into vibrant and varied ones. That phenomenon is described by Vertovec (2007) as 'super-diversity.' Hence, cultural variety can be categorized into various dimensions: ethnicity, religion, arts and culture, language, traditional architecture, traditional attire, and the assortment of traditional cuisine. In that research, the composition of diversity is divided into the 17 most prominent ethnic groups from 34 provinces in Indonesia (see Table 1). Therefore, these two tribes have become the ethnicities that dominate the area of ethnic identity in Indonesia.

From a religious perspective, most of the Indonesian population adheres to Islam. Regarding followers of different faiths, such as Christians and Catholics, most are concentrated within a limited number of tribes, namely the Batak, Dayak, Asmat Papua, and Ambon tribes. However, a significant proportion of Chinese descent adhere to Buddhism and Confucianism, and a vast majority of individuals of Balinese descent practice Hinduism. The cultural heterogeneity of Indonesian society is seen in the diverse array of religious activities, which are manifested through many religious institutions. In Indonesia, two prominent religious institutions function as distinct religious sects: NU (Nahdatul Ulama) and Muhammadiyah. Each organization possesses distinct attributes, resulting in individuals selecting a mosque based on their affiliation with a particular institution, despite the absence of religious limitations on prayer in mosques.

Similarly, Christianity is fragmented into various distinct groups with corresponding churches. Each religious institution aligns itself with its corresponding educational institution, a mosque, or a church. While these religious traditions contribute to the growing socio-cultural intricacy, they also intensify the apprehension of conflict.

Religion and culture are two entities rooted in human existence since the dawn of civilization. Both are interconnected, influencing our cognitive processes, social interactions, and the development of our sense of self. Religious and cultural perspectives must be considered as one of the contributing variables. The study's findings represent how the general population perceives and comprehends local culture and religion in Indonesia.

Table 2. Public perception of understanding local culture and religion

Variables	Public perception of understanding local culture and religion	%
Culture	Culture maintains harmony	91,90%
Religion	Culture strengthens obedience to God	91,50%
Language	Mastery of regional languages	94,20%
	Mastery of national languages	87,90%
	General cultural knowledge	74,40%

The significant proportion of participants who expressed that culture fosters harmony (91.90%) and reinforces obedience to God (91.50%) indicates that local culture is crucial in enhancing social cohesiveness and bolstering society's spiritual and religious principles (Jayadi et al., 2018). That aligns with the perspective that local culture can serve as a moral and ethical bedrock that fosters a cohesive and devout communal existence. Proficiency in local and national languages also yielded intriguing outcomes. The significant proficiency in regional languages (94.20%) highlights the crucial role of local languages in building a robust cultural identity within society. Regional languages serve as both a medium of communication and a vehicle for passing down cultural values and customs between generations. However, the somewhat lower yet still significant proficiency in the national language (87.90%) highlights the crucial function of Indonesian in bringing together individuals from diverse cultural origins across the nation.

Nevertheless, the overall cultural literacy rate was 74.40%, suggesting a need for more comprehension of different facets of the local culture. That could be attributed to urbanization, globalization, and the need for a comprehensive cultural education. While the community acknowledges the significance of culture in upholding harmony and religious practices, there is still room for enhancing the comprehensive and profound comprehension of local culture.

The appreciation of local culture and solidarity with religious and cultural diversity

Diversity assessment can also be observed through individuals' attitudes and acceptance of other religions and cultures and their mutual support in fostering solidarity. Our adherence to respect and gratitude in how we behave, interact, and communicate with the environment exemplifies the acceptance of diversity. It also involves promoting peace and comfort when engaging in worship. Similarly, a sense of solidarity can be shown by the capacity to assist in fostering shared respect, safeguarding the environment, and promoting mutual tolerance. Adopting that mindset is challenging, as it necessitates being conscious and receptive to new encounters to prioritize fostering unity with others. According to McConachie (2007), Those with an open belief system refrain from imposing rigid interpretations of morality in social interactions and instead value virtues that promote peaceful relationships with others.

In that research, these two dimensions become indicators of people's acceptance of religious and cultural diversity. Religious values are significant in tolerance and acceptance of religious diversity. (Merino 2010). Then, the appreciation indicator is measured through a composite of two main variables: appreciation of universal culture and cognition of acceptance by religious adherents of their traditions and culture. Meanwhile, the accommodative indicator in that research is seen in the variable of community solidarity towards religious and cultural relations that do not reject the application of these traditions in the environment. The research results show that the average level of public appreciation for local religion and culture is outstanding (a total of 80.8).

Analyzing the index of religious acceptance toward cultural diversity in 2024 revealed positive and negative outcomes across different sub-variables. The sub-variable measuring cultural appreciation achieved the maximum score of 91.8, suggesting that religious followers in Indonesia exhibit a relatively high level of adaptability to many cultures. The community demonstrated great solidarity with cultural diversity, as seen by a high score of 88.2. That score indicates a strong willingness to embrace and accommodate various cultural traditions. Nevertheless, the sub-variable about cultural practices and regional languages achieved a lower score of 62.4 despite a notable upward trend over the previous three years. That indicates that although there has been advancement in the acceptance of different cultures, there still needs to be improvement in maintaining and engaging in local cultural practices and regional languages.
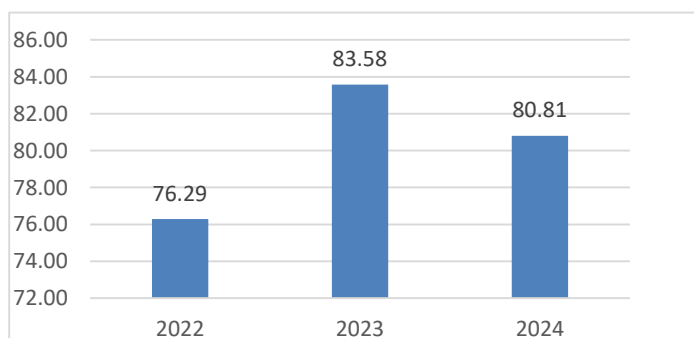

Figure1. Religious and cultural diversity acceptance index from 2022-2024

According to the given data, the overall measure of religious acceptance in 34 provinces in 2024 declined to 81 (Figure 1), compared to 83.6 in 2023, but showed a gain of 5.3 points compared to 2022. The decrease of 2.6 points from the previous year signifies a significant change in popular sentiments regarding diversity. Several factors have led to that decline, such as the rising political polarization (which coincided with Indonesia's recent 2024 election period), the impact of social media that frequently sparks tensions among different groups, and various national and international events that may affect public perceptions and attitudes. Furthermore, the swift evolution of social dynamics and the escalating use of intolerant language might also contribute to the decrease in the embrace of variety. Moreover, that decrease is also attributed to specific factions holding exclusive perspectives toward their group, manifesting intolerant conduct. Religious exclusivism is a form of conflict regarding religious intolerance (Jonathan et al., 2018). That inclination towards exclusivity can result in the emergence of collective narcissism, which refers to conduct that portrays one's religious and racial group as superior and underappreciated by the surrounding culture.

That notion is corroborated by statistics data released by the Directorate of Social and Cultural Affairs of the Indonesian National Police Intelligence and Security Agency in 2023. According to these statistics, the number of recorded cases of religious intolerance in Indonesia between 2019 and 2023 has reached a substantial level, specifically approximately 65 cases. Geographically, Java, North Sumatra, and Lampung have the highest cases. An instance of disagreement frequently arises is the requirement to acknowledge the establishment of religious sites that lack consent from most prevailing religions. Collective narcissism is evident as an expression of exclusive religious oneness in that setting. Hence, the likelihood of violence stemming from religious and ethnic differences will persist across Indonesia. That decrease signifies the necessity for more rigorous endeavors to foster tolerance and reverence for disparities, including education, governmental measures, and societal initiatives that might enhance social cohesiveness and foster a more inclusive and reverential attitude towards religious and cultural variety.
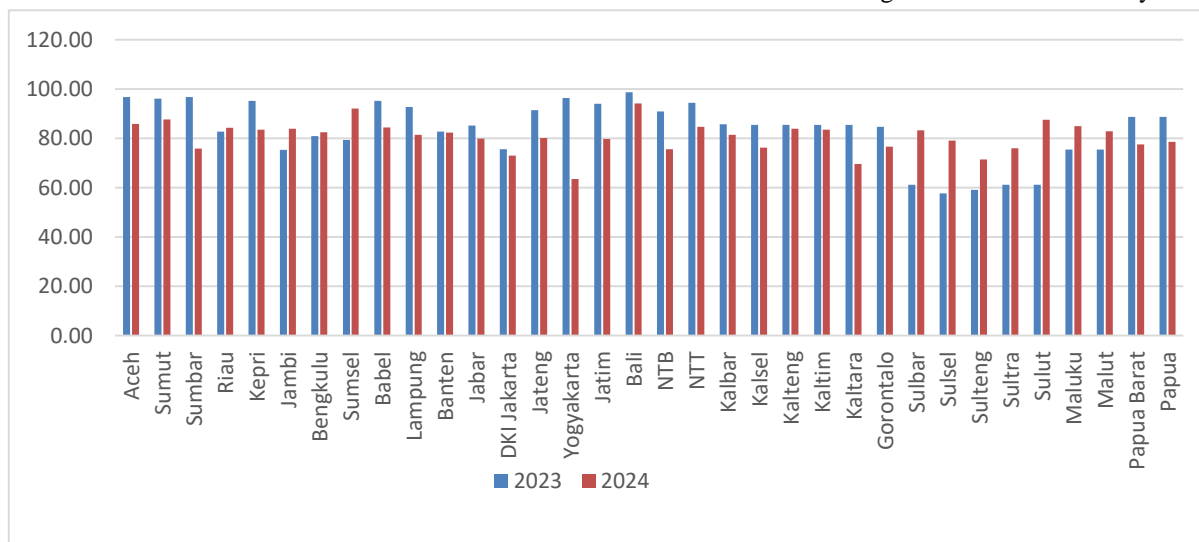

Figure 2. Results of the Religious and Cultural Diversity Acceptance Index in 34 Provinces in Indonesia in 2024

Meanwhile, the index results, categorized by area, exhibit a volatile pattern, with several provinces witnessing divergent fluctuations in both upward and downward directions (Figure 4). In the 2024 rating, Bali achieved the highest score of 94.1, followed by South Sumatra with 92.0, North Sumatra with 87.7, Aceh with 85.9, and Maluku with 84.9. These scores indicate notable differences in cultural acceptance throughout the provinces. These findings highlight the need for a targeted and localized strategy to promote cultural acceptance. They underscore the significance of implementing region-specific policies and programs to attain improved and uniform outcomes.

Moreover, examining the cultural variety acceptability index in the Indonesian archipelago environment reveals a varied pattern from 2022 to 2024. The provinces of Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Java, NTT, NTB, Bali, and Papua encountered variable conditions in obtaining index results. That graph demonstrates the diverse social and cultural dynamics in each archipelago, where specific locations witness a rise in cultural acceptability in one year and a decline in the following year. Nevertheless, a noteworthy

discovery is the significant and constant increase in the Maluku Islands. During the past three years, the Maluku Islands have consistently demonstrated a rise in the cultural acceptance index. In contrast, other regions, such as the Sulawesi Islands, have witnessed changing trends. The steady growth of the Maluku Islands can be ascribed to indigenous efforts that have effectively fostered cultural inclusivity and open-mindedness with educational activities and legislation that uphold cultural heterogeneity. The steady growth in the Maluku Islands serves as a favorable illustration of how interventions and programs centered on cultural acceptance can provide a lasting effect. These findings highlight the significance of comprehending the specific circumstances in Indonesia when creating policies and programs to encourage cultural diversity. Developing strategies customized to each region's social and cultural dynamics is also crucial.

The study's multiple linear regression test results offer valuable insights into the correlation between the acceptance of cultural diversity in religion and the likelihood of conflict in Indonesia. The R square value of 0.042 and the adjusted R square value of 0.034 suggest that the variable of religious acceptance of cultural diversity can account for approximately 4.2% of the variation in the potential for conflict. After considering other independent variables, that percentage decreases to around 3.4%. Conducting simultaneous testing using the F statistic at a significance threshold of 0.000 reveals that accepting cultural diversity has a limited impact on reducing the likelihood of conflict. Notably, there was a consistent rise in collective narcissistic behavior over the years, with scores of 39.2 in 2022, 33.7 in 2023, and 62 in 2024.(Kholis et al., 2024).

Collective narcissism encompasses a sense of superiority towards other groups and harboring negative perceptions of different groups that are perceived as distinct from one's group (Cichocka, 2016). Instances of tribalism resulting from religious sentiment or vice versa serve as precise indications of that intolerance. For instance, the Ahmadiyah Islamic organization faced long-standing opposition in many regions, including Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara in 2001, Cikeusik, Pandeglang Regency in 2011, and Sintang Regency, West Kalimantan in 2021. Similarly, the local Sundanese ethnic group consists of individuals who follow the Sundanese sect known as Wiwitan. Alongside other marginalized sects, such as the Shia, Bahai, and Confucian societies, they encountered exclusion, and the Indonesian government refused to acknowledge their doctrines. Collective narcissism can result in religious exclusivity and the emergence of extremist movements.

DISCUSSION

In the dynamics of religious and cultural diversity in Indonesia, it was found that local culture plays an essential role in strengthening social cohesion and the spiritual values of society. As language becomes a symbol of cultural identity, it serves as both a tool for communication and a vehicle for forming cultural values. Paradoxically, the survey findings indicate that individuals have a relatively limited understanding of their culture (74.4%). A gap in society's knowledge of religious and cultural diversity must be addressed, as it can spark conflict.

Indonesia has always regarded Bhinneka Tunggal Ika as the country's essential foundation in addressing that situation. Finally, the government has implemented a policy of religious moderation, as per the Regulation of the Minister of Religion Number 18 of 2020. Nevertheless, what is the efficacy level of implementing that religious moderation policy in mitigating the likelihood of conflict? That can be observed through two parts of the approach to embracing religious and cultural diversity: (1) the importance of the community's recognition and acceptance of their religious and cultural differences, and (2) the significance of community unity in accepting religious and cultural diversity.

The poll findings indicate a decline of 2.6 points on the acceptance index of religious and cultural diversity compared to the previous year. That is a phenomenon that requires thorough observation and analysis. That decrease can be attributed to a range of variables, including both internal and external influences. Internally, political and religious polarisation exerts a profound influence, particularly given the context of Indonesia's ongoing election. The practices of identity politics and religion are considered the most effective way to win the election. In addition, the widespread dissemination of hate speech and false information on social media and other platforms has exacerbated unfavorable attitudes towards marginalized communities. The primary external factor is the influence of the COVID-19 epidemic, which significantly affects the socio-economic aspects of the community. That has led to heightened stress and anxiety, leading to a reduced capacity for tolerance and acceptance of diversity. Decreasing the acceptance index of religious and cultural diversity can incite social strife and undermine national unity.

The policy of religious moderation is a response to various tensions and religious and sectarian extremism. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and GNPK (National Movement for the Protection of Pancasila) have been the most prominent

organizations advocating for that policy thus far. In the same vein, the policy of religious moderation has been implemented and socialized in various institutional institutions annually, including the contribution of ideas related to religious moderation in the form of discussions, writing articles, and books (which, according to Google browser identification, over 175 thousand articles and 852 books). That implies that the state has utilized its resources to promote social harmony and peace by implementing the policy of religious moderation. Nevertheless, the impact of that policy's implementation on establishing social harmony in that nation has not been evaluated.

The results of that study indicate that the policy of religious moderation has only reduced the potential for conflict in Indonesia by 4.2%. That is recognized when elements that generate conflict, including religious intolerance, politics, feelings of threat, the intensity of violent actions, and collective narcissism, are associated with certain aspects of the cultural approach. The data indicates that religious acceptance of cultural diversity significantly influences the potential for conflict, with a 4.2% effect. Other factors may influence the potential for conflict, as that influence is relatively minor. One of the factors that is thought to influence the potential for conflict is collective narcissism. According to research findings, there has been a consistent increase in the development of collective narcissism over the years, while the acceptance of religious and cultural diversity fluctuates. That collective narcissism emerges as a response to the potential for conflict. It could be that that is influenced by cultural changes that threaten and suppress their identity, such as excessive nationalism, racism, and identity politics, or through false social media information, thus triggering a sense of excessive superiority among other groups. Another possible factor could be manipulative leadership, which takes advantage of group emotions and encourages their tendency to form exclusive sects based on beliefs and other factors.

Ultimately, the study's findings indicate that while there may be a high acceptance of religious and cultural diversity, the likelihood of conflict is not necessarily reduced. That phenomenon can be attributed to additional factors, including substantial economic disparities among religious or cultural groups. Social injustice, manifested in systematic bias and prejudice against marginalized and underrepresented minority groups, coupled with historical legacies of inter-religious or cultural conflicts in certain regions, can contribute to heightened tensions. Additionally, the manipulation of religious and cultural sentiments by political actors for their gain, along with the disruptive influence of globalization and the influx of information carrying potentially destabilizing ideologies and external influences, further exacerbate the potential for social conflict.

CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the significance of accepting cultural diversity in reducing the likelihood of conflict. Nevertheless, its impact is constrained and necessitates evaluation within the framework of additional contributing elements. The increase in collective narcissism suggests that the nation's solidarity is threatened. That presents a fundamental challenge in intergroup dynamics, necessitating a more all-encompassing strategy. Collective narcissism emerges as a response to the potential conflict, although that relationship is intricate and impacted by numerous additional factors. In order to decrease the likelihood of conflict and foster social harmony in Indonesia, it is necessary to adopt a more comprehensive and unified approach.

Regarding the policy of religious moderation as an effort to suppress conflict, it appears that an in-depth evaluation is necessary regarding the policy of religious moderation as an attempt to suppress potential conflict and how religious moderation programs can be more effective, especially in solving the latent problem of national solidarity. Collaborating and working with other parties also needs to be considered, particularly the significance of social media in influencing public perception and behaviors.

We recognize that that study has several limitations that should be considered. First, although the analysis shows a significant correlation between acceptance of cultural diversity and the potential conflict, the magnitude of that effect is relatively minor, suggesting that other unexplored elements may exert a more substantial influence. Second, the data used are cross-sectional, so they cannot reveal the dynamics of changes in attitudes and behaviors over time. Third, the use of a composite index, although helpful in seeing the big picture, may not comprehensively encompass the complexity of diversity and conflict issues.

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