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Religious Perspectives on Social Harmony: Strategies for Addressing Sara Conflicts in Indonesia

Najih Fatha Shidqi[1], & Al Baihaqi Anas[2]
[1]Department of Syaria, Al-Azhar University Cairo
[2]Department of Arabic Teaching, Universitas Islam Negeri Bukit Tinggi

Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This study aims to provide a deep understanding of religious perspective on social issues and the role of religious teachings in creating social harmony. Additionally, this research aims to make a significant contribution to knowledge, particularly in the fields of religious studies and sociology, by adding literature on religious views on social conflict and offering new approaches to addressing SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group) conflicts based on religious teachings. The findings show that religious teachings in Indonesia contain principles that support social harmony and peace, such as love, tolerance, and respect for differences. For instance, the Quran in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13 emphasizes the importance of respecting differences and living peacefully. In Christianity, Romans 12:18 teaches the importance of living in peace with everyone, while in Hinduism, the concept of "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" teaches that the world is one family, emphasizing respect for all humans. However, challenges in implementing religious teachings to prevent and resolve SARA conflicts include diverse religious interpretations, social and political influences, and the spread of misinformation through social media. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts among religious leaders, the government, and civil society, including digital literacy education, enforcement of regulations related to hate speech, and the promotion of tolerance and interfaith dialogue.

Corresponding Author:

Najih Fatha Shidqi
Department of Syaria, Al-Azhar University Cairo
Email:

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a country with diverse ethnicities, religions, races, and inter-group differences (SARA), often faces complex social challenges. SARA issues have become an integral part of the social-political dynamics in Indonesia, with a long history of conflicts and tensions often triggered by identity differences. SARA conflicts can take various forms, including discrimination, violence, and prolonged communal conflicts that threaten social stability and harmony [1]. An example of SARA conflict in Indonesia is the riots in Ambon from the late 1990s to the early 2000s [2]. Initially, these conflicts were disputes between Muslim and Christian groups but escalated into communal violence involving thousands of people, resulting in many casualties and property damage.

These conflicts demonstrate how religious identity differences can trigger violence and social instability. Additionally, ethnic conflicts in West Kalimantan in the late 1990s between the Dayak and Madurese tribes also serve as a concrete example of SARA conflict. This strife led to thousands of deaths and displacement of thousands of others [3]. This conflict indicates that besides religious differences, ethnic differences can also be a primary source of tension and violence in Indonesia.

A more recent case is the riots in Wamena, Papua, in 2019 [4]. Based on compiled data, the chaos in Wamena on September 23, 2019, was triggered by the spread of false information about a teacher's racist act against a student. This fake news sparked anger among residents, leading about 200 people, including high school students and community members, to protest by marching to a school. The protest took place at 9:00 AM local time in response to the hate speech issue that had spread [5].

According to records from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo), from 2018 to 2023, they have taken down 3,640 hate speech content based on SARA. Of these, 54 contents were first uploaded by Joseph Paul Zhang, allegedly containing hate speech and hostility [6]. The General Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) also indicates a high risk of SARA politicization ahead of the 2024 regional elections, with Jakarta ranking first and North Maluku second with a score of 7716 points, followed by the Special Region of Yogyakarta with a score of 1481 points. Other provinces showing high vulnerability are West Papua (1481 points), West Java (1235 points), and West Kalimantan (714 points) [7].

These vulnerability scores reflect the potential use of SARA issues as a political tool that can trigger social conflict and disrupt regional stability [8]. In Indonesia's multicultural and multi-religious social context, research on SARA conflicts (ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group) is highly relevant. SARA conflict is one of the greatest challenges facing Indonesian society, threatening national unity and cohesion. Therefore, this study aims to examine various religious views on SARA conflict and develop strategies to prevent and address these conflicts based on religious insights.

The significance of this research lies in the fact that Indonesia, as the country with the world's largest Muslim population, also has diverse other religions such as Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. This diversity should be a cultural asset but often becomes a source of conflict. By understanding various religions' views on SARA conflict, this research can provide deeper insights into how each religion perceives these social issues and how religious teachings can contribute to social harmony. Secondly, this study aims to make a significant contribution to knowledge, especially in the fields of religious studies and sociology. This research will not only add literature on religious views on social conflict but also offer new approaches to resolving SARA conflicts within the framework of religious teachings.

2. METHOD

The research method uses in this study involves qualitative, historical, theological and sociological approaches to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of religious teachings in social harmony and strategies for overcoming SARA conflicts. Through literature studies, case analysis and historical studies, this research aims to offer a new approach and make a significant contribution to the understanding and resolution of social conflicts in Indonesia.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, it is explained the results of research and at the same time is given the comprehensive discussion. Result can be presented in figures, graphs, tables and others that make the reader understand easily [14], [15]. The discussion can be made in several sub-sections.

3.1. SARA Conflict in the Perspective of Islamic Teachings

Islam, as a religion of mercy for all creation (*rahmatan lil 'alamin)*, offers deep insights into the importance of maintaining harmony and tolerance among people of different faiths and groups. From the theological and historical aspects, the teachings of Islam on SARA conflict can be understood.

3.1.1. Theological

From a theological perspective, Islamic teachings emphasize the principles of moderation and justice in interacting with fellow humans, regardless of ethnicity, religion, race, or group. This principle of moderation includes attitudes such as tawassuth (not extreme), tawazun (balance between worldly life and the hereafter), and i'tidal (striving to be just in all matters to create peace) [9]. This is reinforced in the Quran, Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13, which as the primary source of Islamic teachings, emphasizes the importance of living peacefully with various groups.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَٰكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَٰكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوٓا۟ ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

"*O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.*"

This verse shows that differences in ethnicity and nationality are natural and should be approached with mutual understanding and respect. *Tafsir* (exegesis) by Ibn Kathir explains that this verse commands building relationships and avoiding hostility based on ethnic and tribal differences [10]. According to Muslim scholar Prof. Dr. M. Quraish Shihab in his tafsir*, Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, this verse emphasizes the importance of respecting differences as a blessing from Allah. Shihab stresses that every human has equal dignity before Allah, and differences should be seen as cultural richness rather than sources of conflict [11].

Furthermore, Quraish Shihab explains that the command to "*know one another*" (*lita'arafu*) in the verse has deep meaning. It is not only about physical recognition but also understanding each other's character, culture, and habits. This is important for building mutual understanding and reducing prejudice that can trigger conflict. By knowing one another, people can appreciate each other's uniqueness and work together in harmony [11]. Additionally, the concept of piety mentioned in this verse emphasizes that a person's nobility in the sight of Allah is not determined by ethnicity, nationality, or race, but by their level of piety. Tafsir Al-Qurtubi adds that this verse rejects all forms of racial superiority and teaches that all humans are equal in the eyes of Allah, with the only distinction being their piety [12].

3.1.2. Historical

From a historical perspective, Islamic history records many events where Muslims lived peacefully with followers of other religions. One often-cited example is the period in Medina under the leadership of Prophet Muhammad SAW. At that time, Prophet Muhammad SAW succeeded in building a pluralistic society where Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived peacefully. This is reflected in the Charter of Medina, which became the world's first constitution, regulating the rights and obligations of various communities in Medina [13].

Dr. Karen Armstrong, a renowned historian and author, in her book *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*, describes how Prophet Muhammad SAW implemented principles of tolerance and coexistence in Medina. Armstrong states that Prophet Muhammad SAW created an inclusive society model that respected religious differences [14]. Additionally, after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Sultan Mehmed II granted religious freedom to Christians and Jews [14]. He allowed them to practice their religion, rebuild their damaged places of worship, and guaranteed their rights as citizens in the Ottoman Empire. This policy reflects a high level of tolerance towards religious minorities.[15, p. 105]

According to Prof. Dr. Ali Mazrui, an expert in Islamic history and politics, in his book *Islam: Between Globalization and Counter-Terrorism*, there are many historical examples showing that Islam has a long tradition of tolerance and protection of minorities. Mazrui emphasizes that Islamic history is full of examples where Muslims lived peacefully with followers of other religions [16]. For example, in the history of the Islamic caliphates, there are many instances where Muslim leaders showed tolerance and protected the rights of minorities. For instance, Caliph Umar bin Khattab, in the Aelia Agreement, guaranteed security and religious freedom for Christians in Jerusalem [16].

Additionally, during the Umayyad dynasty in Al-Andalus (711-1031 AD), Jews enjoyed a golden age in their history. They had religious freedom, the same civil rights as Muslims, and many of them held high positions in government, education, and commerce. Historian Bernard Lewis states that during this period, Jews experienced protection and freedom rarely found elsewhere in the world at that time [17].

3.2. SARA Conflict in the Perspective of Christian Teachings

From the perspective of Christian teachings, SARA conflict can be analyzed through deep theological and historical approaches. By combining these approaches, we can get a comprehensive picture of how Christian teachings have and can continue to play a role in creating a harmonious and tolerant society.

3.2.1. Theological

Christian teachings strongly emphasize love, peace, and tolerance. One of the most fundamental teachings in Christianity is the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself. In the Gospel of Matthew 22:39, Jesus Christ says [18]:

" And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. "

This commandment underscores the importance of love and respect for others regardless of ethnicity, religion, race, or group. Theological interpretations, such as those by William Barclay, explain that this teaching is the foundation for building a peaceful and harmonious society [19]. According to C.S. Lewis, in his book *Mere Christianity*, love in Christian teachings is not just an emotional feeling but also concrete actions for the well-being of others. Lewis emphasizes that true love involves sacrifice and tangible actions to help others [20].

Moreover, in Paul's letters, there are many teachings emphasizing the importance of living peacefully with everyone. In Romans 12:18, Paul writes [21]:

" If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

This verse shows that Christians are expected to strive as much as possible to live in peace with everyone. Matthew Henry's commentary states that this teaching urges Christians to avoid conflict and promote reconciliation [22].

3.2.2. Historical

From a historical perspective, Christian history records many events where the teachings of love and tolerance were applied in real life. One famous example is Martin Luther King Jr.'s actions in his struggle against racial discrimination in the United States. In his famous speech "I Have a Dream," King cited Christian teachings on love and justice to oppose racism and promote unity [23]. Martin Luther King Jr. not only spoke about love in theory but also applied it in concrete actions. He led various peaceful protests, passionately spoke about equal rights, and inspired millions to oppose racial injustice.

In his view, the struggle against racial discrimination was a manifestation of Christian faith that promotes love and justice. Christian history also records how churches in South Africa played a crucial role in the struggle against apartheid. Nelson Mandela, in his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, mentions that many church leaders bravely stood against injustice and supported the anti-apartheid movement based on Christian teachings of love and justice [24].

Churches in South Africa, such as the Methodist and Anglican churches, played a significant role in supporting the anti-apartheid movement. They not only provided moral support but also offered refuge for activists and organized various campaigns to end racial segregation. Many church leaders were arrested and imprisoned for

their bravery in opposing apartheid policies. Another example is the role of churches in saving Jews during the Holocaust. Many churches and Christian organizations hid and protected Jews from being captured by the Nazis [25].

These actions were based on Christian teachings about the sanctity of human life and universal love. During the Holocaust, many priests and nuns took great risks to save Jews. They hid them in churches, monasteries, and safe houses and provided them with false identities to escape capture. These heroic actions are concrete examples of how Christian teachings on universal love were applied in extremely dangerous situations.

3.3. SARA Conflict in the Perspective of Hindu Teachings

Hindu teachings emphasize the importance of applying *dharma* (moral duty) and *ahimsa* (non-violence) as the main foundation in building a harmonious and tolerant society. From the perspective of Hindu teachings, SARA conflicts can be comprehensively analyzed through theological and historical approaches.

3.3.1. Theological

Hindu teachings strongly emphasize the principles of dharma (moral duty) and ahimsa (non-violence). These principles are crucial in creating a harmonious and tolerant society. In the Bhagavad Gita, one of the main sacred texts in Hinduism, Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna about the importance of fulfilling *dharma* without violence [26]:

"अहिंसा परमो धर्म (Ahimsa paramo dharma)" which means "Non-violence is the highest duty.''

According to Swami Vivekananda, a prominent Hindu religious reformer, the teaching of ahimsa should be applied in every aspect of life to achieve true peace. Vivekananda explains that ahimsa not only means refraining from physical violence but also avoiding hatred or ill intentions towards others [27]. Additionally, Vedic teachings also emphasize the importance of tolerance and respect for differences. In the Rig Veda, there is the concept of "*Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti*," which means "*Truth is one, the wise call it by various names*" [28].

This concept teaches that all paths to truth are valid and should be respected. According to philosopher and former President of India, Radhakrishnan, this teaching shows that Hinduism has an inclusive view and respects diversity [28]. In another study, teachings such as "*tat twam asi*," which teaches that "*You are that*," encourage awareness of the essential unity of all beings, and "*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*," which teaches that "*The world is one family"* [29]. Radhakrishnan notes that within Hinduism, there is ample room for pluralism and religious tolerance.

He emphasizes the importance of the concept of Advaita Vedanta, which underlines that on a deeper level, all religions are manifestations of the same divine reality. This affirms the view that different spiritual paths ultimately lead to the same goal [30]. Mantras such as "*Om Shanti Shanti Shanti*" are often used in Hindu prayers and ceremonies to create and maintain peace within themselves and in the surrounding community [31]. The repetition of the word "*Shanti"* three times aims to bring peace to the body, mind, and soul, as well as to the entire universe [32].

3.3.2. Historical

From a historical perspective, the history of Hinduism records many events where the principles of dharma and ahimsa were applied in real life to address conflicts. One famous example is Mahatma Gandhi's leadership in India's independence struggle. Gandhi strictly applied the principle of ahimsa in the Satyagraha movement, which means "*truth force*," to fight British colonialism without violence. In his speeches, Gandhi often quoted the Bhagavad Gita to inspire Indians to adhere to the principle of non-violence [33].

History also records how Hindu kingdoms in India sought to create harmonious societies by adopting policies of tolerance. One example is the Ashoka Empire in the 3rd century BC. After deeply regretting the war of Kalinga, King Ashoka decided to embrace Buddhism and promote *ahimsa* and religious tolerance. He issued various edicts encouraging his subjects to live peacefully and respect all religions [34].

Another example is the Chola dynasty in South India, known for their policies supporting religious tolerance and diversity. They built temples for various Hindu deities and supported Buddhist and Jain communities. This shows that historical Hindu governance often adhered to principles of inclusiveness and respect for religious differences [35].

3.4. SARA Conflict in the Perspective of Catholic Teachings

Catholic teachings emphasize the importance of love and forgiveness as the basis for building a harmonious and tolerant society. Through theological and historical approaches, we can understand how Catholic teachings advocate for peace and tolerance and how these principles have been applied historically.

3.4.1. Theological

In Catholic teachings, love (caritas) and forgiveness (forgiveness) are essential principles in creating a harmonious and tolerant society. In the Gospel, Jesus teaches to love others regardless of their background, as stated in Matthew 5:44 [36]:

" Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, love is the principal ethical principle in Christianity that should be applied in every aspect of life to achieve true peace. Aquinas explains that love not only means refraining from physical violence but also avoiding hatred or ill intentions towards others [37]. Additionally, Catholic teachings also emphasize the importance of interfaith dialogue and respect for differences. The Second Vatican Council, in the document *Nostra Aetate*, affirms that the Catholic Church respects and appreciates all other religious traditions and encourages interfaith dialogue and cooperation [38].

According to John Paul II, interfaith dialogue is the path to sustainable peace. In the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* [39], he emphasized that sincere and respectful dialogue is an effective way to overcome differences and promote unity [40]. Paus Fransiskus, in the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, also emphasizes the importance of interfaith

dialogue as a means to achieve social peace and human harmony. He stresses that sincere and respectful dialogue is an effective way to overcome differences and promote unity. [41].

n the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth) written by Paus Yohanes XXIII, the importance of justice, love, and solidarity in creating world peace is highlighted:

" *Peace on earth, which all people of all times desire, can only be firmly established if the order established by God is respected*" [42].

Paus Yohanes Paulus II in the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, also emphasized the importance of respect for human dignity as the basis for social justice and peace. He stressed that every human being has fundamental rights that must be respected regardless of ethnicity, religion, or race [43]. Catholic theologians like Karl Rahner also emphasize the importance of love and forgiveness in Catholic teachings. According to Rahner, true love involves self-sacrifice and tangible actions to help others, in line with the teachings of Jesus Christ in the Gospel [44].

3.4.2. Historical

The history of the Catholic Church records various efforts to apply the principles of love and forgiveness in real life to address conflicts. One famous example is the role of the Catholic Church in the reconciliation process in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide. The Catholic Church was involved in various initiatives to promote forgiveness and reconciliation among the victims and perpetrators of violence [45]. History also records how the Catholic Church supported the civil rights movement in the United States.

Archbishop Joseph Rummel of New Orleans, for example, issued a decree ending segregation in Catholic schools in 1962, which was a significant step in supporting the civil rights movement [46]. Additionally, the Catholic Church has a long history of protecting minorities. During World War II, many Catholic monks and nuns saved Jews from being captured by the Nazis. A famous example is Italian nun Sister Maria Restituta, who helped hide Jews in monasteries and safe houses [25].

3.5. SARA Conflict in the Perspective of Buddhist Teachings

Buddhist teachings offer insights that can help understand and address SARA conflicts by emphasizing the principles of non-violence, tolerance, and love. By understanding Buddhist teachings from theological and historical aspects, we can see how these principles have been applied to build a harmonious and tolerant society.

3.5.1. Theological

Buddhist teachings strongly emphasize the principles of non-violence (*ahimsa*) and universal love (*metta*). According to Borah, the teaching of non-violence in Buddhism means avoiding physical external violence and internal mental violence. Non-violence is key in teaching love towards all living beings through actions, words, and thoughts [47]. The principle of universal love (*metta*) in Buddhist teachings also emphasizes creating and maintaining peace within oneself and society [48].

In the Vinaya Pitaka, the Buddha instructed monks to "*walk on a journey for the blessing of many people, for the happiness of many people, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, blessing, and happiness of gods and humans*" [49]. This shows the Buddha's commitment to spreading peace and welfare without discrimination.

The Buddha also taught the importance of tolerance and respect for other beliefs. In the *Digha Nikaya*, the Buddha taught that the Dhamma is the path to freedom from suffering, but he never forced others to follow his teachings. This attitude is shown by advising the ascetic Nigrodha that everyone should stick to their teachings if they believe it is true [50]. This approach helps avoid conflict with others and shows respect for differences in belief.

Moreover, religious moderation in Buddhism is a key to achieving balance and peace. This practice involves maintaining balance in all aspects of life, including interfaith relationships. This is explained in the *Paramatthaka Sutta*, where the Buddha taught that dogmatic views considered supreme and greatest would hinder spiritual progress and cause disputes [51]. By promoting moderation, Buddhism helps reduce extremism and fanaticism, often causing SARA conflicts [52].

3.5.2. Historical

The history of Buddhism records various efforts to apply the principles of love and non-violence in real life to address conflicts. One significant example is the role of Buddhist monks in the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka after prolonged ethnic conflict. The monks played a crucial role in promoting dialogue and understanding between warring ethnic groups by teaching the importance of tolerance and peace based on Buddhist teachings [53].

Contemporary research also supports this view, showing that Buddhist teachings on love and tolerance play a vital role in promoting social harmony and reducing tensions between ethnic and religious groups. For example, a study in *Peace and Conflict Studies* by Tatsushi Arai shows that conflict transformation approaches based on Buddhist teachings can help address complex structural conflicts through self-reflection and active relationship-building practices [54].

3.6. SARA Conflict in the Perspective of Confucian Teachings

In the perspective of Confucian teachings, SARA conflicts can be analyzed through theological and historical approaches. Through these approaches, we can understand how Confucian teachings advocate for peace and tolerance and how these principles have been applied historically.

3.6.1. Theological

Confucian teachings strongly emphasize ethics, morality, and social harmony. These principles are expressed in the main teachings of Confucius found in classical texts such as the Analects (*Lunyu*), Mencius (*Mengzi*), and the

Book of Changes (*Yijing*). One of the main concepts in Confucianism is "*Ren*" (仁), which means humanity or love. Confucius taught:

" *Ren is loving others*."

The principle of "*Ren*" emphasizes the importance of treating others with respect and kindness. According to Confucius, achieving a harmonious life requires every individual to behave well and show humanity in their relationships with others [55]. Additionally, the concept of "*Li*" (礼), which means norms or rituals, is also essential in Confucian teachings. "*Li*" includes etiquette, ethics, and manners that help maintain social harmony and reduce tension between groups [56].

In this context, Confucian teachings emphasize the importance of moral and ethical education from an early age to shape individuals who uphold values of virtue and social harmony. Furthermore, the Confucian teaching of "*Yi*" (义), or justice, emphasizes the need for social justice as a fundamental foundation in maintaining societal stability [57]. The principle of "Yi" demands that every individual, especially those in power, act justly and wisely, covering both material aspects and treatment. According to Confucius: [58].

" *A Junzi (noble person) understands what is justice, whereas a small person only understands profit*" [55].

3.6.2. Historical

From a historical perspective, Confucian teachings have been applied in various situations to address conflicts and promote peace. One example is the role of the Han Dynasty in spreading Confucian teachings as a moral and ethical foundation in governance. During the Han Dynasty, Confucian teachings became the basis for the education and bureaucracy system, helping create a more orderly and harmonious society [59].

Another example is the application of Confucian teachings in Korea during the Joseon Dynasty. During this period, Confucian teachings became the basis for the governance and education system, helping create stability and harmony in society. Confucian scholars in Korea developed the concept of "Silhak" (practical learning), emphasizing the application of Confucian teachings in daily life to address social and economic issues [60].

Research by Li Chenyang (2008), published in *Philosophy Compass*, examines the concept of harmony in classical Confucian philosophy and shows how the concept of harmony is applied in various aspects of life to create a peaceful and prosperous society. Li emphasizes that harmony is not only about the absence of conflict but also about balance and harmony in social relationships [61].

3.7. Analysis of Religious Views on SARA Conflict

Religious views on SARA conflicts generally emphasize the importance of love, tolerance, and respect for differences. Based on the research findings, major world religions have principles that support social harmony and peace. Here are some proofs:

1. **Love for Fellow Humans**

   Major religions place love as the primary foundation in interacting with fellow humans. In Islam, for example, the Quran, Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13, emphasizes the importance of respecting differences and living peacefully. Tafsir by Quraish Shihab explains that respecting differences is a form of love demanded in Islam. Additionally, in Buddhism, which strongly emphasizes the principles of non-violence *(ahimsa)* and universal love *(metta)*, the principle of non-violence (ahimsa) means avoiding physical external violence and internal mental violence, and universal love *(metta)* means creating and maintaining peace within oneself and society.

2. **Tolerance**

   Major religious teachings also emphasize the importance of tolerance in building a peaceful society. In Christian teachings, for example, Romans 12:18 teaches Christians to strive to live in peace with everyone. Martin Luther King Jr., a famous Christian figure, used the teachings of love and tolerance to fight racial discrimination peacefully. This shows how Christian teachings can be used to promote tolerance and social justice. Additionally, in Catholic teachings, through the document Nostra Aetate from the Second Vatican Council, interfaith dialogue and respect for differences are emphasized. Pope Francis, in the encyclical Fratelli Tutti, emphasizes that sincere and respectful dialogue is an effective way to achieve peace. This shows that Catholicism encourages tolerance and dialogue as a path to harmony.

3. **Respect for Differences**

   Respect for differences is a fundamental principle taught by major religions worldwide. In Hindu teachings, for example, the concept of "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" teaches that "*The world is one family*," emphasizing the importance of respecting all humans as part of one big family. This shows that Hinduism encourages respect for diversity as a path to social harmony. In Confucian teachings, the principle of "*Ren*" emphasizes the importance of treating others with respect and kindness, while "*Yi*" (义) or justice emphasizes the need for social justice as a fundamental foundation in maintaining societal stability. Additionally, the concept of "*Li*" (礼), which means norms or rituals, is also essential in Confucian teachings. "*Li*" includes etiquette, ethics, and manners that help maintain social harmony and reduce tension between groups.

3.8. Challenges in Implementing Religious Teachings in Indonesia to Prevent and Address SARA Conflicts

In implementing religious teachings to prevent and address SARA conflicts in Indonesia, several key challenges need to be addressed. These challenges include diverse religious interpretations, digitalization, and social and political influences.

1. **Diverse Interpretations of Religious Teachings**

Diverse interpretations of religious teachings often become sources of conflict, especially when these teachings are used for purposes not aligned with the universal values of the religion. Two main factors related to this issue are radicalism and superficial understanding of religious teachings. *First,* radicalism arises when certain groups feel threatened by modernization and globalization, prompting them to defend their identity in extreme ways. According to Juergensmeyer in *Terror in the Mind of God*, radical groups often use religion to justify their violent actions, even though the core teachings of their religion emphasize peace. Radicalism is often triggered by feelings of injustice and marginalization, making these groups feel that violence is the only way to gain attention and bring about change [62].

A concrete example in Indonesia is the suicide bombing at the Makassar Cathedral Church by a married couple linked to the Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) in 2021, showing how radicalism remains a serious threat in Indonesia. This act injured dozens and caused fear in the community.[63, pp. 23–25] Secondly, many people lack a deep understanding of their religious teachings, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts. A study by Putnam and Campbell (2012) in *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* found that inadequate religious education can lead to stereotypes and prejudices, which in turn can trigger inter-religious conflicts. [64, pp. 310–315] This is supported by Tajfel and Turner's (1979) explanation that group identity, including religious identity, can cause in-group and out-group bias [65].

When religious understanding is shallow, differences between groups can be magnified, leading to conflict. An example in Indonesia is the conflict in Sigi Village, Central Sulawesi, in 2020, where four people were killed by the radical group East Indonesia Mujahidin (MIT), showing how a lack of deep understanding of religious teachings and the influence of radicalism can trigger violence. This group used extreme religious interpretations to justify their brutal actions, causing inter-religious tensions in the area [66].

2. **Social and Political Influences**

Social and political influences also play a significant role in triggering and exacerbating SARA conflicts in Indonesia. Two main factors related to this are identity politics and economic and social inequalities. Identity politics refers to using group identity, including religion, for political purposes. Chandra, in the article "What is Ethnic Identity and Does it Matter?" published in the *Annual Review of Political Science*, shows that identity politics is often used by politicians to rally support by dividing society along identity lines, including religion [67].

An example in Indonesia is the 2017 Jakarta regional elections, which clearly showed the use of identity politics. Religious issues were used to attack the incumbent governor candidate, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), who is Christian. This campaign leveraging religious sentiment caused polarization and tension in society, even sparking large-scale demonstrations and acts of violence [68]. Secondly, economic and social inequalities can exacerbate tensions between ethnic and religious groups in Indonesia. When certain groups feel oppressed or do not have equal access to resources, they may use religious identity as a basis for mobilizing to fight for their rights.

Wilkinson's study in *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India* shows that social and economic inequalities are often major triggers of ethnic and religious conflicts, especially when used by political elites to gain electoral advantage [69]. The conflict in Papua is an example of how social and economic inequalities can trigger ethnic and religious tensions. The economic disparity between the resource-rich Papua region and other parts of Indonesia, along with the lack of representation and political rights for Papuan people, has led to separatist sentiments and prolonged conflict [70].

3. **Digitalization**

One major challenge of digitalization is the rapid and uncontrolled spread of information. False information or hoaxes can easily spread widely through social media, sparking tensions and conflicts between groups. Research by Witro et al. (2023) shows that conflicts are often exacerbated by the spread of hoaxes that incite and provoke people to act aggressively towards other groups. Manipulation of public opinion through digital media is also a significant challenge [71]. For example, during the 2017 Jakarta regional elections, religious issues were intensively used to attack the incumbent governor candidate, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), who is Christian [72]. Additionally, in December 2023, a statement by a Bali senator, Wedakarna, during a meeting at Ngurah Rai Airport, also sparked controversy as it was considered to touch on SARA issues, potentially triggering conflicts between ethnic and religious groups [73].

Facing these challenges requires collaborative efforts among religious leaders, the government, and civil society. Digital literacy education is crucial to teach people how to recognize and verify information, thus reducing the spread of hoaxes and hate speech on social media. Enforcement of regulations related to hate speech must be strengthened to ensure that violations are dealt with firmly, preventing the spread of information that can trigger conflicts.

Moreover, promoting tolerance and interfaith dialogue is a strategic step that must be continually pursued. Programs encouraging interfaith harmony and understanding can reduce tensions and enhance social cohesion. Such collaboration not only helps prevent conflicts but also builds a stronger foundation for peace and harmony in

Indonesia. Initiatives like interfaith dialogue forums and digital literacy training for the general public need to be continuously encouraged and developed to achieve these goals.

4. CONCLUSION

The religious teachings in Indonesia contain principles that support social harmony and peace. Major religions' views on SARA conflicts generally emphasize the importance of love, tolerance, and respect for differences. Based on research findings, the teachings of major world religions support social harmony and peace through principles of love for fellow humans, tolerance, and respect for differences. For example, in Islam, the Quran, Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13, emphasizes the importance of respecting differences and living peacefully. In Christian teachings, Romans 12:18 teaches Christians to strive to live in peace with everyone.

In Hindu teachings, the concept of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" teaches that "The world is one family," emphasizing the importance of respecting all humans as part of one big family. However, in practice, the role of religious teachings in preventing and addressing SARA conflicts in Indonesia faces several key challenges. First, diverse religious interpretations, which include factors of radicalism and superficial understanding of religious teachings. Second, social and political influences, which include factors of identity politics and economic and social inequalities. Third, false information or hoaxes can easily spread widely through social media, sparking tensions and conflicts between groups.

Facing these challenges requires collaborative efforts among religious leaders, the government, and civil society. Digital literacy education is crucial to teach people how to recognize and verify information, thus reducing the spread of hoaxes and hate speech on social media. Enforcement of regulations related to hate speech must be strengthened to ensure that violations are dealt with firmly, preventing the spread of information that can trigger conflicts, as well as promoting tolerance and interfaith dialogue.

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