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LIFE IN HARMONY AS A KEY TO SUSTAINABLE MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Husnul Holifah, Ahmad Fadli, Helda Mega Maya

Pancasila and Citizenship education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher
Training and Education, PGRI Argopuro University, Jember
Email : mkembar153@gmail.com

Abstract

A multicultural society is a social reality that cannot be avoided in modern life, especially in countries with a high level of diversity such as Indonesia. The diversity of cultures, ethnicities, languages, and social values requires the establishment of a harmonious way of life so that these differences do not develop into potential social conflicts. This article aims to analyze the concept of life in harmony as a key to building a sustainable multicultural society by positioning the Pandhalungan Javanese–Madura tradition as an empirical example of harmonious living based on local wisdom.

The method used is a qualitative-descriptive approach through literature review, analysis of socio-cultural theories, and examination of the social context of the Pandhalungan community in the Tapal Kuda region of East Java. The results of the study indicate that values such as mutual respect, tolerance, openness, social solidarity, and cultural adaptation embedded in the Pandhalungan tradition play an important role in maintaining social harmony across generations. These values function not only as social norms but also as mechanisms of social integration that strengthen cohesion in a multicultural society. Therefore, the Pandhalungan tradition can serve as a local model for strengthening sustainable multicultural practices in Indonesia.

Keyword : Multicultural Sociaty, Life in harmony, pandhalunan tradition, local widsom, social integration, Tolerance.

INTRODUCTION

Diversity is a defining characteristic of Indonesian society, which consists of various ethnic groups, cultures, languages, religions, and value systems. This condition makes Indonesia a multicultural nation with immense social and cultural potential. However, diversity also presents serious challenges if not managed wisely. Differences in cultural identity, ethnic background, and value systems can develop into potential social conflicts if not framed within a harmonious way of life.

In Indonesia's social history, various conflicts rooted in identity differences indicate that diversity requires sustainable social management. Therefore, a multicultural society is not sufficient to merely acknowledge diversity as a social fact, but must also develop social mechanisms capable of maintaining harmony in collective life. At this point, the concept of *life in harmony* becomes highly relevant to be studied and developed.

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The concept of *life in harmony* emphasizes the importance of balanced, peaceful, and mutually respectful social life within a diverse society. Harmonious living is not merely defined as the absence of conflict, but also as the ability of society to build fair, inclusive, and sustainable social relations. Social harmony reflects the maturity of a society in managing differences through dialogue, tolerance, and cooperation.

The importance of *life in harmony* becomes even more evident amid globalization, which brings rapid changes in social interaction patterns, value systems, and lifestyles. Globalization often triggers the weakening of traditional social bonds, increasing individualism, and the emergence of cultural exclusivism. These conditions risk eroding local values that have long functioned as social cohesion within society.

In this context, strengthening local wisdom becomes an important strategy in maintaining harmony in multicultural societies. The Pandhalungan tradition,

which develops in the Tapal Kuda region of East Java, represents a form of local wisdom that reflects harmonious living practices in diversity. This tradition emerged from a long interaction between Javanese and Madurese cultures, forming a distinctive social and cultural system. Therefore, this article seeks to examine in depth how the concept of *life in harmony* is realized in the Pandhalungan tradition and its relevance in building a sustainable multicultural society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiculturalism has become a central discourse in understanding diversity in modern societies. According to Bhikhu Parekh (2006), multiculturalism is not only about recognizing cultural differences but also about constructing a shared public sphere where diverse groups can interact based on equality, mutual respect, and dialogue. This view is reinforced by Will Kymlicka (2012), who argues that minority rights and cultural recognition are essential elements in achieving justice within multicultural states.

In the field of education, James A. Banks (2014) emphasizes that multicultural education plays a crucial role in fostering inclusive values, reducing prejudice, and developing intercultural competence. Education becomes a strategic medium for internalizing values such as tolerance, equality, and respect for diversity, which are essential for sustaining harmonious social relations.

From a sociological and anthropological perspective, culture is understood as a system of meaning that shapes human behavior. Clifford Geertz (1973) explains that culture consists of symbolic systems through which individuals interpret and respond to their social environment. In multicultural societies, differences in these symbolic systems can potentially lead to misunderstanding and conflict if not managed through shared norms and social integration mechanisms.

The concept of social integration is fundamental in maintaining harmony in diverse societies. Emile Durkheim (1893) introduced the idea of social solidarity as the glue that binds individuals within a society. In multicultural contexts, this solidarity

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must be built through mutual understanding and interdependence among cultural groups. In Indonesia, Parsudi Suparlan (2014) highlights that social integration in a plural society requires adaptive mechanisms rooted in local values and collective identity to prevent social fragmentation.

Local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) has been widely recognized as an effective approach to managing diversity. Alo Liliweri (2018) argues that intercultural communication based on empathy, openness, and respect can minimize prejudice and conflict. Similarly, Koentjaraningrat (2009) explains that cultural values embedded in local traditions function as guidelines for social behavior and contribute to maintaining social order.

In the Indonesian context, several studies highlight the role of local culture in promoting harmony. H.A.R. Tilaar (2012) emphasizes that multiculturalism in Indonesia must be grounded in cultural values that support unity in diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*). This principle underscores the importance of balancing diversity with national integration.

The Pandhalungan tradition represents a concrete example of cultural acculturation in Indonesia. Cultural acculturation, as described by Koentjaraningrat (2009), occurs when different cultural groups interact intensively, resulting in the blending of cultural elements without eliminating their original identities. In this case, the interaction between Javanese and Madurese cultures has produced a unique hybrid identity.

Empirical research by Teguh Haryono (2015) shows that Pandhalungan culture serves as a social bridge that integrates differences between the two cultural groups. The combination of Javanese values such as harmony, politeness, and humility with Madurese values such as assertiveness, openness, and strong social solidarity creates a balanced and adaptive social system.

Moreover, Robert D. Putnam (2000) introduces the concept of social capital, which refers to networks, trust, and norms that facilitate cooperation within society. In multicultural communities, strong social capital contributes significantly to maintaining social harmony and collective resilience. The Pandhalungan tradition reflects this through practices such as *gotong royong*, communal deliberation, and shared cultural activities.

From a sustainability perspective, UNESCO (2017) emphasizes that sustainable societies require continuous value transmission, inclusive participation, and adaptive cultural systems. In multicultural contexts, sustainability depends on the ability to preserve harmony while adapting to social changes.

Despite extensive discussions on multiculturalism and local wisdom, there remains a gap in connecting abstract theoretical frameworks with concrete cultural practices. Most existing studies focus either on normative theories or descriptive cultural analysis. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by examining how the concept of *life in harmony* is practically implemented in the Pandhalungan tradition and how it contributes to building a sustainable multicultural society.

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METODE PENELITIAN

Metode This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach to analyze the concept of *life in harmony* within the Pandhalungan tradition. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because it enables an in-depth understanding of social phenomena, cultural values, and meanings constructed within a multicultural society. The research adopts a socio-cultural perspective, focusing on how values of harmony are formed, internalized, and practiced within the daily life of the Pandhalungan community.

The data used in this study are secondary data obtained through an extensive literature review. Sources include academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and relevant institutional publications, such as those issued by UNESCO, as well as previous studies discussing multiculturalism, social harmony, local wisdom, and the interaction between Javanese and Madurese cultures. These sources were selected based on their relevance, credibility, and contribution to the research topic.

Data collection was conducted using a documentation method, which involves identifying, reviewing, and compiling written materials related to the research focus. The collected data were then analyzed using a thematic analysis technique. This process includes data reduction, categorization into key themes such as tolerance, social integration, and cultural adaptation, followed by interpretation to identify patterns and relationships. The analysis is carried out inductively, allowing concepts and findings to emerge from the data.

To ensure the validity of the findings, this study applies source triangulation by comparing multiple references from different academic disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, and education. However, this study is limited to a literature-based analysis and does not involve direct field observation or interviews. Therefore, the findings are interpretative in nature and future research is recommended to incorporate empirical methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the concept of *life in harmony* is deeply embedded in the social practices of the Pandhalungan community, which represents a cultural synthesis of Javanese and Madurese traditions. This acculturation process has produced a unique socio-cultural system that emphasizes balance, mutual respect, and adaptability in managing diversity. The interaction between these two cultural backgrounds does not eliminate differences but instead creates a complementary relationship that strengthens social cohesion.

One of the key findings is the presence of core values such as tolerance, openness, mutual respect, and social solidarity. These values are not merely abstract principles but are actively practiced in everyday life. Community activities such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), village meetings (*musyawarah*), and collective participation in religious and cultural events demonstrate how social harmony is maintained through shared practices. These activities foster a sense of belonging and reduce the potential for conflict by encouraging interaction and cooperation across cultural boundaries.

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Another important finding is the role of cultural adaptation in sustaining harmony. The Pandhalungan community demonstrates a high level of flexibility in integrating elements from both Javanese and Madurese cultures. This is evident in communication practices, particularly the use of a mixed Javanese– Madurese language, which serves as a tool for bridging cultural differences. Language, in this context, functions not only as a means of communication but also as a symbol of inclusivity and social integration.

The study also highlights the importance of value internalization and intergenerational transmission in maintaining sustainable harmony. Cultural values such as respect, tolerance, and cooperation are passed down through family, social interactions, and community traditions. This continuous transmission ensures that the principles of *life in harmony* remain relevant and practiced across generations, contributing to long-term social stability.

In relation to broader theoretical perspectives, these findings support the idea that social harmony functions as a mechanism of integration in multicultural societies. The presence of shared norms and collective values strengthens social trust and reinforces community bonds. This aligns with sociological views that emphasize the importance of social cohesion and collective consciousness in maintaining social order.

Furthermore, in the context of globalization and modernization, the Pandhalungan tradition demonstrates resilience against emerging social challenges such as individualism, cultural fragmentation, and identity-based conflicts. The strong foundation of local wisdom enables the community to adapt to external changes while preserving internal harmony. This indicates that local cultural practices can serve as effective strategies for managing diversity in a rapidly changing world.

Overall, the results show that the Pandhalungan tradition is not only a cultural identity but also a practical model of *life in harmony*. It provides a concrete example of how multicultural societies can achieve sustainable coexistence through the integration of values, social practices, and cultural adaptation.



CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the concept of *life in harmony* plays a crucial role in building a sustainable multicultural society. In the context of the Pandhalungan tradition, harmonious living is reflected through values such as mutual respect, tolerance, openness, cultural adaptation, and social solidarity. These values are not only understood normatively but are also practiced in everyday social interactions,

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making them effective mechanisms for maintaining social cohesion.

The findings demonstrate that the Pandhalungan tradition serves as a concrete example of how cultural diversity can be managed constructively without eliminating the identity of each cultural group. Through processes of acculturation and continuous value transmission, the community is able to create a balanced and inclusive social system that supports long-term harmony.

Moreover, this study highlights the importance of local wisdom as a strategic foundation in addressing the challenges of globalization, such as individualism and social fragmentation. By strengthening the values of *life in harmony* through education, social practices, and cultural preservation, multicultural societies can enhance their resilience and sustainability.

Therefore, the Pandhalungan tradition can be positioned as a local model for promoting harmonious multicultural practices. It offers valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and communities in developing inclusive, stable, and sustainable social systems in diverse societies.

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