



# Revitalizing Local Wisdom: The Governance of Religious Diversity in Manado

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**Abstract.** The religious diversity in Manado is prone to triggering social tensions. Various mechanisms and policies for managing religious pluralism have been attempted to prevent socio-religious conflicts. One of the strategies is the revitalization of local wisdom as a foundation for religious harmony. However, along with social dynamics, potential problems arise in inter-religious relations. This study aims to discover how to revitalize local wisdom as a cultural strategy in the politics of governance of religious pluralism in Manado. This research method uses qualitative data collection through interviews, observation, and documentation studies. Data analysis used an interactive model with reduction stages, data display, and conclusion. This study uses systems theory consisting of Adaptation, Goal attainment, integration, and latency (AGIL) from Talcott Parsons. The results of the study show that the decreasing level of tolerance in Manado City is influenced by factors, namely (1) the politicization of religion, (2) discrimination against minority groups, (3) religious radicalism, (4) stereotypes "Islamic terrorists, Christian missionaries " (5) restrictions on the establishment of places of worship. To overcome these problems, the government and religious leaders optimize local wisdom as a cultural strategy to strengthen tolerance and harmony, such as *torang samua basudara*, *torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*, *Si tou timou tumou tou*, and *Mapalus*. This local wisdom becomes the basis of socio-cultural values that become a reference for policies and practices of social relations between religious communities.

**Keywords:** Religious Diversity, Governance, Local Wisdom

## 1 Introduction

Religious pluralism is one of the strengths and a challenge for Indonesia's plural and multicultural nation. Religious diversity, on the one hand, has a positive impact in creating social capital [1], social change [2], and integration [3]. But on the other hand, diversity is also prone to social conflict between religious communities [4]. Socio religious conflicts in a plural society often arise due to differences in understanding, prejudice, and truth claims [5]. The estrangement of relations between religious communities is also influenced by social dynamics, for example, changes in policies and imbalances in economic conditions [6].

Tensions in social-religious relations are also prone to occur in a plural society in Manado City. Religious plurality in Manado is relatively high: Islam 30.87%, Protestantism 60.03%, Catholicism 5.22%, Hinduism 0.18%, Buddhism 0.64, Confucianism 0.06% [7]. Although this city received the title of tolerant city in 2017 from the Setara Institute, its ranking decreased to 2 and 3 the following year. This condition shows that harmony is very volatile and even vulnerable. The potential for socio-religious conflict arises amid the dynamics of the Manado community [8]. One of the factors that can influence the potential for socio-religious conflict is the difference in religious interpretation. Each religion has variations in practices, rituals, and understandings that can give rise to differences of opinion. These differences can lead to tensions and conflicts between religious groups if not handled properly. Social and political factors also play a role in the escalation of religious conflict in the city of Manado. Competition for resources, social injustice, and political polarization can exacerbate interreligious relations. Sometimes, religious issues are exploited to achieve specific political goals or to propagate extremist ideologies. The presence of groups trying to undermine religious harmony and influence society to act radically seriously threatens the security and stability of the city of Manado.

Various social frictions between religious communities in Manado show that managing religious pluralism has yet to be optimal. Although, in fact, multiple strategies, policies, and mechanisms have been implemented. One of them is utilizing the local wisdom values of the people of Manado to maintain harmony and tolerance [9]. These values include; *torang samua basudara*, *torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*, *Si tou timou tumou tou* and *Mapalus* [10]. This local wisdom value is the basis for preserving inter-religious harmony; besides that, local wisdom can also be a solution to overcome social disasters by maintaining social harmony through being a bridge between different communities and promoting empathy through daily interaction and communication [11]. However, along with social dynamics, these values become vulnerable and lose power in maintaining social stability. This can be seen from the emergence of tension in relations between religious communities in Manado [12].

The urgency of the role of local wisdom as a foundation for religious harmony encourages this research to find out (1) what factors influence it and (2) how to revitalize local wisdom as a cultural strategy in the politics of governance of religious pluralism in Manado. This research is important not only for practical reasons but also to fill in the gaps left by previous studies. Several studies on the management of pluralism in Manado only focus on topics including; (1) religious moderation [13], (2) civics education [14], (3) Collaboration between religious harmony forums (FKUB) and the government [15] (4) social exchange and religious values [16] (5) social habitus [17] and (6) local wisdom perspective [18]. This research is different from previous research because it focuses more on efforts to revitalize local wisdom in the midst of transformation and social dynamics to preserve inter-religious harmony in Manado. To analyze these points, this study uses the AGIL systems theory from Talcott Parsons.

## 2 Methods

This research was conducted in the city of Manado. The location was determined based on the focus of the research problem, namely the revitalization of local wisdom as a cultural strategy in managing religious plurality in Manado. The method used is descriptive qualitative to explore social phenomena in depth [19], which emphasizes description (thick description) and examines phenomena from subjectivity and individual understanding of social processes [20]. The qualitative approach is felt to be in line with the problem of this research, where researchers wish to explore in-depth data related to Efforts to Revitalize Local Wisdom in Strengthening Religious Tolerance in Manado. Data collection was carried out using participatory observation methods and interviews which were conducted in several stages. Interviews were performed using a semi-structured approach to research informants selected through purposive sampling techniques. The selection of informants was based on the focus and research objectives to obtain comprehensive and representative data. Research informants consisted of interfaith elites, government agencies, local communities, religious moderation houses, FKUB, BKSAUA, and academics who were actively involved in strengthening religious tolerance in Manado.

During the interview, researchers collected data on religious tolerance dynamics and local wisdom in strengthening religious tolerance in Manado. In addition, this study also uses secondary data sources in the form of document studies, reports, and literature reviews, to complete data and information related to the politics of governance of religious pluralism in Manado. The research instruments used were interview sheets and observation sheets. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model with stages (1) data reduction (2) data presentation (3) conclusion [21]. The collected data is then reduced with persistence and consistency in selecting relevant data according to the research focus. The results of the data reduction are then arranged in an argumentative manner and use inductive logic to conclude.

## 3 Result and Discussion

### 3.1 The Dynamics of Religious Tolerance in Manado City

The plurality of religions in Manado City has long historical roots. The city of Manado, located in North Sulawesi Province, has been grouped for centuries. The process of colonization by the Dutch and the influence of international trade have brought about the inclusion of various religions. The period included by Dutch multiples in the 17th century was the starting point for the history of religious plurality in this city. Protestant Christianity and Catholicism are the dominant religions, so the city of Manado is nicknamed the “City of a Thousand Churches, At the same time, some of the people of Manado still maintain traditional.” religion and local beliefs by continuing to carry out rituals and religious practices that have been passed down from generation to generation.

In addition, Islamic influences were also present in Manado through interactions with Arab traders and Bugis ethnic groups who migrated to this area. Although the number of Muslims in Manado is not as large as Christians, the existence of the Muslim community still contributes to religious plurality. The colonial period also brought other religious influences to Manado. Hinduism and Buddhism came through trade and cultural influences from the kingdoms on the island of Java and the archipelago. This influence can be seen from several temples and monasteries in Manado. Over time, migration, urbanization, and globalization have enriched the diversity of religions in Manado. This is because apart from the indigenous people of North Sulawesi, there are also other ethnic villages, such as Arab Villages, Chinese Village, Ternate Village and Islamic Village. Even in Minahasa, as the biggest contributor to the population of Manado, there is also a special village called Kampung Jawa which comes from Kyai Modjo.

The multicultural religious practices of the people of Manado can be seen in the so people of Manado's multicultural religious and cultural; practices can be seen from community's social activities, which developing rapidly, the people often interact by working together in the field of religion, as well as building shared experiences. One of the migrant informants who live in the city of Manado stated that he had never felt disturbed by the diversity of religions in his city. Precisely this diversity taught him and his family about the importance of tolerance between one religion and another. According to him, all of that only requires the existence of individual habits in living their social life, like getting used to listening to the call to prayer even though he is not a Muslim. Listening to and respecting one another will not change one's faith in their god if people are serious about carrying out their divine values. In this city, brotherhood is established based on encouragement and internal awareness that all religions are considered equal as teachings of peace and brotherhood. When viewed from a psychological and cultural perspective, the people of Manado tend to appreciate the warmth of direct relationships between human beings rather than expressing religious values in the abstract. This is the basis for the appreciation of the people of Manado towards religion in aspects of daily life.

Tolerance and cooperation are the main indicators of achieving religious harmony in Manado. So far, Manado has been known as a city of tolerance in Indonesia because, with the condition of a plural society, they can consistently maintain social integration in their area. It is not surprising that Manado was ranked first as the most tolerant city in Indonesia in 2017, but the following year the ranking dropped to positions 2 and 3. In this context, it appears that there are dynamics and social changes that affect the state of tolerance in realizing religious harmony in Manado. The decline in the ranking is related to the dynamics of relations between people influenced by factors such as First, the politicization of religion in the name of religion for political purposes such as identity politics which carries ideological concepts such as religion, ethnicity and culture.

Since the reformation era, identity politics has emerged in Manado and has developed significantly until now due to memories of the Permesta incident. In this context, identity groups in Manado (Minahasa-Christians) have a hidden interest in controlling the political economy. They want to 'get rid' of other ethnicities besides Minahasa. It is proven that the Minahasa people dominate the political government in North Sulawesi. Identity politics is mutually beneficial because to maintain the status

quo (especially as a Christian city), hidden power is needed as a tool of authority [22]. There is even an opinion by the lower middle class Muslim community that the religious harmony program being intensified by the government is a 'covert Christianization' due to disappointment with Manado's political life, which has never been 'occupied' by Muslim officials.

The second factor is discrimination against minority groups, in which the majority group feels they have the power to control society. This makes minorities feel marginalized, controlled, and unable to access their rights, so they do not have the social ability to change their lives. Communities with a much smaller number of people in a group experience discrimination. The subordinated group often feels the narrow, restricted, and unfair treatment space. The minority group shows differentiation from the majority group. The third factor, religious radicalism in the city of Manado is now clearly visible in society. This happens because of the fanatical attitude [23] towards religion, which tends to lean towards bad things, where they have thoughts that are contrary to the truth. Some chaos in Manado, such as cornering each other among followers and terror in the name of religion, is still visible. Certain individuals carry out radicalism to stir up the atmosphere to create a risk of splitting integration in the City of Manado due to a loss of tolerance and negative issues towards certain groups.

The fourth factor, the stereotype of "Islamic terrorists, Christian missionaries", is the bad notion that Islam is seen as a terrorist and Christianity as a propagator of religions with the ambition to dominate the world. This stereotype arises because of a lack of understanding of multiculturalism in society. The notion of terrorist Islam arose from the presence of the jihad fii sabilillah movement to spread the Islamic religion, which is synonymous with violence and is considered a terrorist religion due to the tragedy of the World Trade Center in New York. This stigma created enmity between the two, where Christians rejected the prophethood of Muhammad SAW and the Qur'an; on the other hand, Muslims also criticized changes to the Old and New Testaments. The enmity between the two was also caused by Islamic fighters and Christian missionaries who fought over the people's power [24]. This stereotype developed in Manado and brought new conflicts that have the potential to break the relationship between the two religions. The fifth factor, restrictions on the construction of places of worship, began with the issuance of the 2006 Joint Ministerial Regulation (PBM), which brought new problems, namely the difficulty of access for minority groups to build places of worship. Muslims feel the negative impact of the PBM because many mosques were cancelled due to opposition from residents (especially Christians). Most of the conditions of the buildings with Islamic characteristics and the mosques that will be renovated have been neglected. Christians also cause restrictions on places of worship as the majority group, who are often suspicious of the construction of mosques. Of course, this raises tensions because the PBM regulation separates social life between religious communities in Manado. Before PBM came out, people of different religions did not prohibit each other from building places of worship but now have to rely on complicated rules.

The social dynamics that are occurring in the city of Manado today are very influential and trigger new challenges in maintaining and strengthening religious tolerance. This makes religious people sentimental and suspicious of each other, leading to disharmony and internal conflict. Therefore it is essential for local governments, religious leaders, and the community as determinants of harmony to

always be committed to maintaining and developing tolerance values, strengthening inter-religious dialogue, and appreciating the diversity that exists in Manado City. This aims to increase the social integration of the people of Manado and prevent mass action from being provoked because of the jealousy of specific groups who feel disappointed with injustice in their social life.

In people's lives, of course, conflict is inseparable, both small-scale and large-scale conflicts. Religious conflict in Manado City is a serious concern for the local community and local government. The trigger for this conflict can also be said to be various, including a misunderstanding between one party and another. This misunderstanding can develop into disputes and even wars or divisions between religious communities. Not only that, religious conflicts can also be triggered by political issues and power games. Some elements try to take advantage of religious differences to achieve their political goals, which impacts tensions in interfaith relations. Manado is also inseparable from the threat of terrorism and radicalization. Some extremist groups may use religion as a pretext for carrying out acts of violence or spreading ideologies that undermine interfaith harmony.

The conflict over land ownership beside the Great Mosque of Manado City was once big enough to involve local institutions or organizations. The conflict is enough to make the condition of the surrounding community a little tense. How could it not be? On the one hand the board of the Catholic school foundation claims that the land is theirs, but on the other hand there is an issue that the Grand Mosque will be demolished or the building will be demolished. The MUI and the Management of the Great Mosque of Manado responded to this with caution. With the existence of issues circulating in the community, the institutions involved are negotiating to measure the land that is being sued. After the land measurement process, it was discovered that there needed to be a better understanding on the part of the management of the school foundation. Meanwhile, the issue of the Grand Mosque being torn down was just an issue spread by certain elements so that the conflicts that occurred in the city of Manado would strengthen.

Conflicts on a small scale have also occurred in Manado. One of which is the existence of teenage fights in one area in the city of Manado. The conflict arises due to the unconscious actions and words of the offender, who rambles due to drunkenness. Conflict among adolescents is something that is commonly found in the city of Manado. Such conflicts are caused mainly by the influence of alcohol, which makes the person unconscious in speaking and acting. Luckily, whenever there is a potential for conflict, it does not lead to more immense chaos, such as inter-regional brawls involving mobs.

From some of these events, the potential for open conflict arose which, if not resolved immediately, could enlarge among religious communities. The role of the government, the religious elite, and the community's efforts are significant in reducing the seeds of conflict in the city of Manado. Communities play a crucial role in minimizing the escalation of potential conflicts through family problem solving mechanisms or discussing joint solutions. This mechanism can open opportunities for the formation of openness and space for dialogue between religious communities.

### 3.2 Revitalization of Local Wisdom in Strengthening Religious Tolerance

The people of Manado have historically upheld the values of tolerance and inter-religious harmony. However, the impact of globalization, developments in information technology, and social change have had a significant impact on patterns of social interaction and inter-religious relations. This dynamic raises concerns about the emergence of social conflict and intolerance. To face this challenge, the Manado city government has launched several programs to strengthen tolerance aimed at promoting mutual respect, respecting differences, and encouraging cooperation among religious believers. These programs seek to create an inclusive and harmonious social climate among multicultural communities in Manado City.

One of the programs that have been launched is multicultural education and awareness. This multicultural education focuses on conveying the values of tolerance, harmony, and respect for differences to the younger generation through curriculum and extracurricular activities. In this program, the younger generation is taught about universal values such as equal rights, respect for differences, and the importance of dialogue between cultures and religions. This helps create an inclusive mindset and reduces prejudice and discrimination between religious communities. In addition, the Ministry of Religion of Manado City also held a tolerance strengthening program by having a Religious Moderation Camp activity based on "One Tent, Different Religions". This program involves setting up a tent or meeting place, which is a symbol of inclusivity, where all people from various religions and beliefs can gather, dialogue, and share experiences, not only that this event also involves discussions, seminars, workshops, and other activities that encourage interfaith dialogue. During the Religious Moderation Camp, participants are encouraged to respect religious differences and look for shared values that underlie these religions, such as love, peace, and justice. Through dialogue and cooperation, there is hoped to be a better understanding and mutual respect between religious communities.

Not only that, IAIN Manado (Manado State Islamic Institute), an Islamic higher education institution in the city of Manado, also launched a Media Syndication program that aims to disseminate information about the values of tolerance, harmony, and interfaith dialogue through various mass media. In its implementation, IAIN Manado cooperates with local mass media, both print and electronic, to present content that promotes messages of religious tolerance. In addition, IAIN Manado also works with local television and radio stations to offer programs that support strengthening religious tolerance. Programs such as interfaith dialogue, religious discussions, or interviews with religious leaders effectively spread tolerance messages and build better understanding among religious believers. In this growing digital era, IAIN Manado is also taking a step forward by spreading religious tolerance content through social media platforms. Posts that contain wise quotes from various religions, inspirational stories about religious harmony, as well as diversity campaigns are an effective way to reach a wider audience. Through this media syndication program, IAIN Manado hopes to influence public opinion and form a more open mindset to religious diversity.

In addition, to strengthen tolerance in society, it is necessary to have the role of elites and religious institutions. Elites, including community leaders, religious leaders, and other important figures, as well as religious institutions, including FKUB (Forum for

Religious Harmony) and BKSAUA (Agency for Inter-Religious Cooperation), play a crucial role in promoting dialogue, understanding, and harmony between religious communities. FKUB is not only tasked with maintaining inter-religious harmony but also has the responsibility to provide recommendations regarding establishing places of worship. The program to build houses of worship is part of the collaboration between the government and FKUB. In addition, city FKUB has duties regulated in the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religion Number 09 of 2006 and the Minister of Home Affairs Number 08 of 2006, specifically in Article 09 Paragraph 2.

So that the values of solidarity, social harmony, and cooperation can be strengthened. Collaboration with interfaith leaders plays a role in (1) increasing awareness of religious understanding and serving as role models in the implementation of religious practices or worship procedures, (2) voicing the rights and protection of religious people in anticipating conflicts, (3) facilitating religious dialogue to avoid problems related to the majority minorities acting in the name of religion (4) Monitoring religious conditions in society by providing appropriate directions, and (5) Holding religious activities with the theme of religious moderation.

The role of elites in strengthening tolerance can be seen through their influence and authority in society [15]. Community leaders who are respected and recognized by the community have an excellent opportunity to influence the views and attitudes of others. When this elite prom of tolerance, mutual understanding, and respect for differences, it forms a mindset and behaviour that respects diversity. Religious leaders also have an important role to play in strengthening religious tolerance. They have spiritual authority and deep knowledge of religious teachings and religious practices. Religious leaders who are proactive in promoting interfaith dialogue, understanding, and cooperation among religious believers can help reduce conflict and build peace.

Amid ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, the people of Manado have succeeded in creating a fantastic harmony. Internalization of local wisdom values is the primary key to realizing this harmony. Some of the local wisdom still adhered to by the people of Manado include Mapalus (Cooperation), Torang Samua Basudara, Torang Samua ciptaan Tuhan, and Sitou Timou Tumou Tou. The practices and values of this wisdom have contributed to increasing tolerance among the people of Manado.

The implementation of local wisdom in Manado is carried out in various ways, for example, in Mapalus activities. In these activities, people usually help each other, such as during the harvest season or when building a house. These Mapalus activities were carried out alternately, as stated by the informants. When people harvest, they will be helped by people, and vice versa. This is not only true when gathering but also when you want to build a house. The people around him will help each other in the process. Apart from that, there is also the concept of "Torang samua basudara" or "Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan" whose meaning shows that we are all brothers and sisters regardless of religion, ethnicity or skin colour [25]. This concept teaches the importance of caring for and caring for one another. Implementing the "Torang samua basudara" concept is similar to Mapalus' activities, where people help and look after each other. For example, during the celebration of religious holidays such as Christmas and Easter for Christians, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha for Muslims, Isra' Mi'raj and Islamic New Year for Muslims, Vesak Day for Buddhists, Silent Day for Hindus, and Lunar New Year for



Confucians, they take care of each other, help each other, and celebrate the celebration together. Finally, there is also the concept of "Sitou timou tumou tou" which implies that humans live to humanize other people. In this concept, humans look at each other similarly without judging or demeaning others.

The internalization of local wisdom has played a central role in strengthening tolerance in Manado. The concept of brotherhood is not just a phrase but is deeply rooted in the culture and behavior of the local community. Diversity is used as capital to create harmony, respect differences, and strengthen local wisdom values. Thus, Manado becomes an inspiring example of how a society can live together peacefully in full respect for diversity.

In maintaining and strengthening religious tolerance in Manado City, efforts to revitalize local wisdom play an important role. Local knowledge includes traditions, culture and values that have existed in society for many years. Through the revitalization of local wisdom, the people of Manado can better recognize and respect cultural and religious differences, as well as strengthen tolerance among religious communities. One of the critical points in efforts to revitalize local wisdom is to revive traditions and religious rituals that have existed for a long time. For example, optimizing local knowledge as a cultural strategy to strengthen tolerance and harmony, such as torang samua basudara, torang samua ciptaan Tuhan, Sitou timou tumou tou and Mapalus.

In this context, if analyzed using AGIL theory from Talcott Parson, Adaptation (A) refers to the ability of people to adapt to environmental changes and developing situations. Revitalizing local wisdom such as Torang Samua Basudara, which promotes a spirit of brotherhood and unity, can help the people of Manado adapt to their various social and economic challenges. The nature of mutual respect as God's creations, as reflected in Torang Samua ciptaan Tuhan, also helps society maintain tolerance of differences and overcome potential conflicts.

Goal Attainment (G) includes how society sets and achieves common goals. By reviving values such as Si Tou Timou Tou, which means "No one is higher than the other," the people of Manado can work towards a common goal of harmony and brotherhood. An understanding of togetherness and unity in Mapalus can also be a guide in achieving a larger common goal. Integration (I) refers to how a society brings its various parts together into a well-functioning whole. Revitalizing local wisdom can help integrate multiple ethnic, religious, and cultural groups in Manado by teaching values such as mutual respect and assistance (Torang Samua Basudara). The understanding that all people are creations of God (Torang Samua ciptaan Tuhan) also contributes to better integration by overcoming separation and differences. Latency (L), or this function, relates to how people maintain their social values and norms from generation to generation. By preserving and reviving local cultural values such as Si Tou Timou Tou and Mapalus, the people of Manado can maintain their local wisdom, which can serve as a reminder and reinforcement of tolerance, harmony, and brotherhood among future generations.

By adopting AGIL's theoretical approach to revitalizing local wisdom in Manado, the community will be able to strengthen tolerance and harmony, create a more

harmonious and respectful environment, and strengthen their unique cultural identity. This can contribute to creating a more inclusive and balanced society in Manado.

## Conclusion

Revitalizing local wisdom plays a vital role in strengthening tolerance in the plurality of Manado. The potential for rifts in inter-religious relations can be minimized. Through various efforts, the government, religious leaders and the community launched a movement to strengthen tolerance based on socio-cultural values such as *Sitou timou tumou tou*, *Mapalus*, *torang samua basudara*, *torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*. These values reinforce people's awareness of the importance of maintaining the values of togetherness, equality and brotherhood. In addition, efforts to strengthen tolerance in the management of religious plurality are also carried out through the activities of "One different religion tent", media syndication and religious moderation house. Local wisdom, apart from representing socio-cultural values, is also the basis for managing religious diversity in Manado society.

## Acknowledgement

This article is a research publication funded by the Institute for Research and Community Service (LP2M) the State University of Malang. Researchers would like to thank for the support and funding assistance for this research. The researcher is also grateful to all interfaith elites, government agencies, local communities, religious moderation houses, FKUB, BKSAUA, and academics who have agreed to become informants in this study. Hopefully, this article is helpful.

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