

# The diversity of interfaith and ethnic relationships of religious community in Indonesia

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The main problem in this research is the number of cases of intolerance in Indonesia. The Indonesian motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, means 'Unity in Diversity', and the implementation of social life processes amidst differences in ethnic groups, cultures, races, and religions occurs because of the attitude and behaviour of intolerance. Therefore, this research aims to describe and analyse tolerance in the diversity of interfaith and ethnic relationships alongside their affiliated values. A phenomenology paradigm and grounded theory approach were adopted using the Tomohon Community as the subject. The data-collection techniques include observation, interviews, documentation and literature research. The result shows the demonstration of proper tolerance among the populace, and the affiliated values encompass the cultural significance of *Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou, Mapalus and Torang Samua Basudara* (We All Are Family). This report recommends further research on the role of government in fostering and maintaining tolerance in the community.

**Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications:** The research's main contribution is to offer *Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou, Mapalus and Torang Samua Basudara* values to the interfaith and ethnic relationship. This finding could be a formula for local context and future agenda that could demonstrate tolerance and harmony.

**Keywords:** tolerance; diversity; society; religion; ethnicity.

## Introduction

Pluralism is the fundamental nature of the Indonesian people, and the motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, profoundly means differences in diversity. This clearly shows the existence of variety in all aspects of the nation, visible in the numerous cultures and religions where social and cultural progress is manifested. Furthermore, some examples of culture include Javanese, Sundanese, Batak and others, while examples of religions include Protestant Christians, Islam, Catholics, Buddhists, Hindus and Confucians; all recognised by the Indonesian government. One captivating feature of society is the existing plurality in religion. As a vast archipelago situated at the crossroads of two continents, the nation has long been favourable for supporting diversity. Despite the presence of an original religion rooted for hundreds of years, various others have been established and flourished. The French historian Denys Lombard once referred to the island of Java as '*Le Carrefour Javanais*' or 'Java Crossroad', indicating the meeting of various cultures in a geographical cross (Lombard 1996; Wirutomo 2011), characterised by no less than five major world religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism. These tend to instil affiliated traditions and methods of interaction with the native and other religions, resulting in a 'cultural cross' (Hefner 2001; Wirutomo 2011).

Despite different customs and cultures, the implementation process in such a diverse society is not as easy as expected. This has led to conflicts between tribes and religions while varying societies and cultures became sources of various horizontal contradictions, as seen from 1997 till date. Moreover, some regions known to have experienced conflicts include Ambon, Papua, Kalimantan, Posso, and others. Disagreements among groups seem inevitable. The initial incidence in Ambon was initiated between groups of people, which developed into conflicts among religions, subsequently spreading to the surrounding areas. Moreover, the lack of tolerance towards existing differences has been attributed as the main influencing factor, where the concept is perceived as a form of action and attitude characterised by a spirit of mutual respect for varying ethnicity, religions, attitudes, opinions and fellow actions (Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan Kurikulum 2010). Notwithstanding these occurrences, the state of concord among the populace of

North Sulawesi is effectively upheld, as they exhibit composure, security, tranquillity and an apparent absence of issues. Nevertheless, the inhabitants also exhibit a wide range of diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion, race and language (Pangalila 2013).

Inside a more limited scope, the municipality of Tomohon, situated inside the North Sulawesi province, exhibits a cohesive and inclusive way of life, characterised by amicable coexistence and acceptance among individuals of all ethnicities, religions and linguistic backgrounds. While the majority of individuals belong to the Minahasa tribe, there are also individuals with origins from many other ethnic groups such as Javanese, Sangir, Bolaang Mongondow, Gorontalo, Totemboan and Chinese, among others. Regarding religious affiliation, the available data indicate that the majority of the population identifies as Christians. However, it is worth noting that there are also adherents of Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism among the populace (Pangalila et al. 2018b).

Most Tomohon residents are Protestant Christians, as the place is a centre for the development of Christianity in North Sulawesi, particularly in Minahasa, which contains an office for the Synod of the most adherent Evangelical Church (GMIM). Similarly, the Roman Catholic Church has numerous adherents and a reasonably long history, with a Seventh-day Adventist Church Office in South Minahasa and Tomohon. Conversely, the Buddhist place of worship is in the form of a temple in Kelurahan Kakaskasen III, and the Muslim residents tend to live in the Kampung Jawa village and have a pesantren in the Kinilow village. Based on 2015 population data, Christians amounted to 66059, with 22293 Catholics, 2851 Islam, 132 Buddhists and 83 practicing Hinduism (BPS Tomohon).

Moreover, there is a significant surge in the Muslim population. This trend might be attributed to the concentration of migrants in specific neighbourhoods. The location in question is specifically situated within the settlement of Kampung Jawa, located in South Tomohon. It is worth noting that the individuals in this area are recognised for their origins from the island of Java. Furthermore, a number of incidents precipitated acts of intolerance, such as the occurrence of a stabbing incident involving a local individual perpetrated by a Muslim clothes merchant hailing from the Gorontalo tribe. This incident took place within the confines of the Tomohon Beriman market. Efforts were made to link certain occurrences with the matter of SARA (*Suku, Agama, Ras, dan Antargolongan* – Ethnicity, Religion, Race and Inter-group Relations), although these endeavours did not permeate or impact the community, given the prompt intervention of governmental authorities and law-enforcement personnel (Pangalila, Ngarawula, & Sadhana 2018a). The residents of North Sulawesi, particularly those of Tomohon, maintain a harmonious coexistence as a result of the robust adherence to local socio-cultural norms. The primary cultural practices in Minahasa, including

*Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou and Mapalus*, have a significant role in shaping the life of the local community, including the Torang Samua Basudara. The concept of Tou Timou Tumou Tou highlights the imperative for individuals to effectively embody human qualities while also encompassing the philosophical teachings of Sam Ratulangi. These philosophical musings serve as a source of inspiration for individuals to lead harmonious lives, with the ultimate goal of fostering collective advancement and preventing animosity (as encapsulated by the Latin phrase '*homo homini lupus*') (Pangalila, Mantiri & Biringan 2019).

Meanwhile, Mapalus is a Minahasa tradition observed in work characterised by cooperation. In a more modern concept, the application is seen in religious events, where Christians celebrating Christmas or Easter day are guarded by young Muslims at Church. This also happens when Muslims commemorate the Eid feasts, and the Christian youths and other affiliated organisations take care of the surrounding mosque. Within North Sulawesi, some institutions maintain interfaith harmony, including BKSAUA (Interfaith Cooperation Agency), by ensuring the combination of both cultures and generating the slogan, *Torang Samua Basudara* (we are all brothers). This clearly illustrates the degree of harmony and full brotherhood maintained by the inhabitants.

As proof of tolerance among the people of Tomohon city amid differences in 2017, the jurisdiction received the Harmony Award from the Ministry of Religion. This was handed over directly by the Minister of Religion Lukman Hakim Saifudin to Mayor Jimmy Eman SE Ak, in the 2017 national work meeting, at the Mercure Convention Center Jakarta, Sunday (26 February 2017). The gathering of people characterises the events of grief as helping families clean the funeral home and make a tent to be used, regardless of the religion and ethnicity of the aggrieved family. Meanwhile, the food is always separated for Christians and Muslims in an atmosphere of joy, including weddings, especially when meals are taken together. All groups are often involved in social life, especially in critical religious events. For example, during Muslim fasting, there is always a joint after-event with the elements of government. Conversely, Christian church activities, including sports and art, are witnessed by representatives from each religion, with the expectation of participation. Some of these actions prove mutual understanding between citizens of different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. This ensures the absence of incidents affiliated with intolerance and conflicts among residents resulting from background differences. There are problem sanctions for people who do not show tolerance, including the practice of isolation from society.

There is a need to maintain and develop the reality of life characterised by tolerance between residents and migrants in the city of Tomohon. This sustainability is threatened by the existence of national issues, including the emergence of radical ideologies dividing Indonesian citizens through

intolerant actions towards followers of other religions. In addition, this case necessitates efforts and intense involvement from all parties, including the government and the people of Tomohon, to maintain the existing atmosphere.

With this in mind, the research question that this article deals with is what can be learned from Minahasa local culture concerning *Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou*, *Mapalus* and *Torang Samua Basudara* (We All Are Family) in relation to the tolerance in Indonesia with its *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* motto?

## Results and discussion

Tolerance in a pluralistic society is reflected in daily social behaviour. Society upholds the values of tolerance and does not care about the concept in members' social behaviour. Real tolerance is evident in their interactions with others in markets and public places, village harmony, weddings, death and religious holidays. The people of Tomohon City are tolerant in everyday life, as evident in the relationships and interactions between indigenous people and migrant communities. The interaction between local communities and migrants of different religious and ethnic backgrounds went well. From the results, the interactions between people of different religions and ethnicities, especially in markets and public places, provided no obstacles or friction. Traders from Java and Gorontalo were more advanced than local traders. There were small incidents in the market between local communities and immigrants trying to be drawn to trigger conflicts between religions and ethnicities. For example, the stabbing case at the Beriman Tomohon market was committed by a clothing trader from Gorontalo against one of the residents who was a fish trader. However, this problem can be resolved as facilitated by the government and religious leaders. After the settlement by kinship, the suspect was processed according to the applicable law because this incident was purely a criminal act. The people of Tomohon City always respond to these issues in a mature way. Tolerance is maintained because there are no distinctions in the interaction between local people and migrants. It is strongly influenced by the cultural values of *Si Tou Timou Timou Tou* and the motto of *Torang Samua Basudara*.

### Local community tolerance

Tolerance of diversity in local communities and the relationship between religion as well as ethnicity in North Sulawesi show support for the theory and concept of multiculturalism. This encompasses the human understanding of the world, applied in every policy related to culture, characterised by the acceptance of reality in the aspect of culture, religion, ethnicity and other variations in people's lives. Furthermore, multiculturalism is an understanding of the world manifested in political consciousness. Its concept recognises respect for each individual's feelings with a sense of responsibility in shared life within a community or society. The rejection by a group of recognition necessities is

the root cause of imbalance in various aspects of human existence (Mahfud 2011).

The results also reinforce the theory of Koentjaraningrat, based on society, which is a collection of people interacting with one another (Koentjaraningrat 2002). In reality, unity is affiliated with a cultural system and the actualisation of certain sustainable customs bound by a sense of communal identity. Therefore, interactions between local people and migrants in the city of Tomohon occur actively in the sense of admonition. This precedes every encounter, even though they are unaware of the individual's religious and ethnic backgrounds. Everyone is considered the same under the slogan *Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou*, meaning that living demands the humanisation of one another and the slogan *Torang Samua Basudara* denotes We Are All Brothers. Practicing this behaviour influences existing cultural standards, in line with the social behaviour theory. This collection is influenced by values, emotions, customs, attitudes, ethics, genetics, persuasion and power (Nawawi 2001).

The investigation is also in line with the concept of social capital, particularly trust, which is the desire to take risks in relationships based on feelings. Some perform activities as expected and always act in patterns that support one another, at least not detrimental to the individual and groups (Putnam 2007). This also follows the theory of Fukuyama (1995) based on trust between members of society, leading to the formation of others and meaningful contributions towards the development of social capital.

Another factor influencing the mindset and pattern of Tomohon city residents' actions towards migrant communities of different religions and ethnicities is the religion of the local population. This supports Nottingham's theory, where standards held by most people are not only a unity of mixed values but are also arranged in levels. The highest is established by religion, making culture and religion the two powerful influences on the local people's mindset and behaviour patterns in building tolerance for immigrants (Nottingham 1994).

The behaviour during interactions with the polite local coconut milk community helps obtain access through the tribe. The newcomers were first briefed on the local customs, language and manners of interaction. This is in line with symbolic interaction theory, most fundamentally characterised by a relationship that occurs naturally, including the symbols created. Meanwhile, social reality is seen as a series of events experienced by a group of people in society and the process of interaction between individuals in a conscious state. Symbolic interactions are related to physical, vocal, bodily movements and bodily expressions. These have meaning and purpose, which in this perspective are referred to as 'symbols' (Wirawan 2010).

Migrants experience the ways of the local community despite the initial conflicts related to the ethnic and traditional religion, dampened into the scope of local culture. This is in

line with the theory of imitation, which is an act or behaviour based on the perception and imitation of others. In addition, the sensory reach level of an individual is highlighted as a significant component that limits what can be seen, heard and felt (Kolip & Setiadi 2011). Imitation holds a central position during an interaction process, with the positive aspect characterised by a person's motivation to obey the applying values or rules.

This is also in line with Weber's opinion, where the realisation of the world was because of social actions, making humans perform activities based on the decision taken. Following the choice of a target, the situation is calculated, followed by the determination of an action (Jones 2016). Ethnic and religious differences also exist, although the differences are affiliated with wealth, amid the variations present in Tomohon city. In the context of community life, diversity is regarded as a condition that features differences in various aspects of life, including religion, beliefs, ideology, ethnicity, race, customs and politeness, as well as disparities in the economic situation (Kolip & Setiadi 2011).

In the Minahasa community, family values are regarded as a way of life that is continuously maintained. In addition, the value of kinship is also evident in the family, the 'original regional' [*Rukun Kawanua*] village pillars and others. These types of harmony serve as a social capital constantly preserved in general. According to Fukuyama (1995), as quoted by Hasbullah (2004), social capital is described as the propensity to adjust an individual's activities and interactions, especially to achieve common goals of organisations and communities. These forms of harmony are concrete forms of implementing the principle of *Mapalus* or *cooperation*, followed by the migrant community adaptation and practice. This incurs a sense of shame when it is not actively conducted, alongside some forms of social sanctions, including isolation. Furthermore, the interaction context between local communities and migrants involves an identification process, which, according to Soekanto (2012), entails the desire or tendency to maintain similarity with others. Other forms of harmony have also been recognised, including the Javanese association in Tomohon, which is under the local customs. These facts showed the commencement of the acculturation process in the lives of local people and migrants. According to Koentjaraningrat (2002), acculturation relates to social processes following the confrontation of a group possessing a particular culture with a foreign type. Therefore, its elements are slowly acquired and accepted by avoiding the loss of cultural personality.

According to social scientists, the unfolding of human life throughout history has overshadowed religion, which is known to be inescapable (Kahmad 2006). In sociology, it means a general social phenomenon devoid of exception, possessed worldwide and regarded as a part of the social system and an aspect of social life (Kahmad 2006). Furthermore, religion refers to an element of culture owned by a community and other elements, encompassing the system of livelihood, social organisations and equipment, languages, as well as arts.

The differences observed include mutual respect between one another, and tolerance is evident in religious events, consisting of Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. This is characterised by the respect Muslims provide during Christian celebrations, including Christmas and Easter, as they are often involved in guarding the premises. During the Muslim celebrations of Eid ul-Fitr, Christians or village youths also partake in the activities at the mosque. For example, in Javanese villages, with a majority being Muslim, days like Ketupat (One Sunday after Eid) always tend to be crowded by people from Tomohon, Minahasa (North and South), Manado and Bitung.

This is in line with the opinion by Kluckhohn, based on culture, as quoted by Geertz (1977), which stipulated the following interpretation for culture (1) the total way of human life, (2) social inheritance from individuals obtained from the group, (3) a technique of thinking, feeling and trusting, (4) a behavioural abstraction, (5) a theory in the science of anthropology concerned with how a group of people behaves in combination with what is learned, (6) all basic guidelines for solving problems, (7) behaviour studied, (8) a standard regulatory mechanism for behaviour, (9) all techniques necessary for adaptation to the environment and (10) an application of history and turning point, perhaps in despair, as a figure of speech, which serves as a map, filter and an arrangement of numbers.

This research also showed the maintained atmosphere of tolerance in the Tomohon city community, especially in the context of different people's lives. This was observed to grow permanently in an atmosphere of diversity, especially with respect to religion and culture. Therefore, the possession of a greater diversity by a nation or society increases the need to develop tolerance values in the lives of individuals, which automatically manifests in the harmony of life. The avoidance of social conflicts and tensions reduces contradiction and hostility (Endang 2009).

### Values responsible for tolerance and diversity in religion and ethnic relations

It is impossible to separate the context of the Tomohon city community from the moral values that apply to Minahasa. This encompasses the orientation shown through social behaviours, including (1) *Masigi-sigian* (mutual respect), (2) *Masaali* (service, especially children to parents), (3) *Marukup* (togetherness/solidarity), (4) Making *Peleng* or *Paumung* (deliberation-consensus) and (5) *Mapalus* (helping one another) (Turang 1997).

The existing norms of society play an important role in controlling behavioural development. This is because they consist of the most basic sense and collections of rules to be followed and obeyed by all members in respective social spheres. These are institutionalised, characterised by social sanctions that function as a deterrent in the conduct of deeds or actions deviating from the prevailing procedures and customs. In addition, the rules tend to be verbal, although

they are well-understood, possessing functions and roles that influence social interaction and relations. Some concrete examples include the appropriation of respect towards the opinions of others, especially older people, norms for healthy living and avoiding cheating. Furthermore, a stronger collection, association, community or group strengthens more lives, especially in the face of globalisation influences.

The cultural value of *Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou* is a belief, concept and idea, often used as a benchmark to determine choices in thinking and to act relating to something appropriate or inappropriate. Furthermore, its values encourage the entire people of North Sulawesi to be tolerant of individuals with different religious backgrounds, ethnicities, races, cultures and languages. From a historical standpoint, this expression entails the philosophy of the Minahasa community, which develops into local wisdom. The progression collectively provides the meaning, wisdom and knowledge to overcome life problems and identify resolving decisions. Therefore, the essence is the embodiment of a conclusion affiliated with the knowledge and understanding of a community group undergoing a development process based on long-term interactions and experiences. In addition, it comprises a system characterised by a bond of mutual relationships (Marfai 2012).

The findings reinforce the opinion of Geertz (1975), which defined culture as:

[A] historical transmission pattern of meanings included in symbols, or a system of conceptions presented and inherited in the way humans communicate. These also involve the development and preservation of knowledge possessed, as well as the responses to personal lives. (p. 3).

Furthermore, Geertz emphasises that culture is an active and constitutive dimension of social life, against a guaranteed mechanism of integration. This was also observed as a 'symbolic arch' or 'blueprint' through which one creates a meaningful world on two levels (Sutrisno & Putranto 2005).

The *Mapalus* value is responsible for the tolerance shown by the people of Minahasa and Tomohon towards migrants. The Minahasa community refers to its local cultural heritage as the basis for construction (Rumbay et al. 2022). This is in line with the opinion of Tylor (1871), as quoted by Munch and Smelser (1992), which reported culture or civilisation as a complex totality of beliefs, art, knowledge, law, customs, habits and other abilities acquired, being a part of the society. *Torang Samua Basudara* (We Are All Brothers) is a motto known to be coined by E. E. Mangindaan, a national figure and the governor of North Sulawesi, recognised as valuable with cultural aspects.

Culture is closely related to groups of individuals, especially with verbal behaviour learned through the generations. Furthermore, it defines distinguishing features between certain groups and also characterises the actions of an individual in specific situations by reflecting the words and general behaviours studied from a particular cultural context. This also includes the continuous influence of the environment because of an action or object (Fallon, O'Keeffe & Sugai 2012).

The cultural value of *Torang Samua Basudara* is a unifying tool that guards the harmony of life experienced by the people of North Sulawesi, as it has become a social capital in Tomohon. This is in line with the opinion of Woolcock (1998), which defined social capital as the level of communal cohesion regarding the processes for building networks, norms and trust. It is recognised as a resource produced by the communication and interaction between individual members of a community. However, the measurement of interaction is rarely involved in social capital estimation. The creation and maintenance of trust between the citizens result from daily interactions (Suharto 2016), possibly in (1) an individual context characterised by interactions that provoke emotional ties because of intimate relationships between the individuals present and (2) institutional context, where interaction increases with common goals and visions among organisations.

This research finding supports the theory of Geertz culture. This defined culture as the historical transmission of meaning in symbols, characterising how humans communicate, preserve and develop knowledge. It was recognised as an active and constitutive dimension of social life rather than a guaranteed mechanism of communal integration. In this research, *Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou*, *Mapalus* and *Torang Samua Basudara* are perceived as historical transmissions of symbols in the life of Tomohon residents and North Sulawesi. These three cultural values have evolved into a conception system inherited and presented as symbols, forming how humans communicate amidst religious and ethnic diversity. Furthermore, this involves preserving good societal habits and developing relevant knowledge and attitudes towards life.

## Conclusion

There is optimal tolerance in the diverse relations between religion and ethnicity among Tomohon city communities, manifested in good interactions at the market and other public places. In addition, respect and the act of openly accepting external cultures tend to support the realisation of tolerance for migrants. Weddings, deaths and religious holidays also facilitate interactions and ethical norms reinforced by a good communication pattern ensure the cultivation of a tolerant attitude. In harmony, the village is maintained because of the implementation of *Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou*, *Mapalus* and *Torang Samua Basudara* cultures, as marriages and other thanksgiving events involve the presence of migrants. Religious and ethnic differences do not preclude community participation in death-related activities. Tolerance amidst differences is evident during religious holidays, characterised by taking care of each place of worship and saying 'hello' to members of all religions. The enforced norms are similar to those practiced by the Indonesian people, and the topics adopted in the interaction between the locals as well as migrants are Indonesian and Manado. Furthermore, the values responsible for promoting tolerance include the culture of (1) *Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou*, which originates from the Minahasa community. This serves as a driving force and controls life in maintaining existence and survival, as well as in the aspect of self-development,

(2) *Mapalus*, a system of community livelihood in various aspects of life, is characterised by the actualisation of human nature, godliness and obedience to the value system of a society and (3) *Torang Samua Basudara* means that we are all brothers and sisters, as well as the way of life in North Sulawesi, particularly in the city of Tomohon. In conclusion, *Tou Timou Tumou Tou* and *Mapalus* influenced the Tomohon community, retaining tolerance towards religious and ethnic diversity. Similarly, *Torang Samua Basudara* served as the basic foundation for its maintenance.

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## Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

## Authors' contributions

T.P. carried out the original draft, methodology and funding acquisition. V.N.J.R arranged the data curation and acquired resources, and C.A.R. supervised and validated the project, and was responsible for project administration and software.

## Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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## Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

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