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Religious Pluralism: A Study of Civil Society Negotiations in Bali Amidst Westernisation

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Abstract

This article discusses the dynamics of religious pluralism in Bali within the framework of Islamic civilisation and contemporary social movements. Bali, whose population is predominantly Hindu, is also home to Muslim communities and other religions, creating a unique space for interfaith interaction. This study focuses on analysing the dynamics of religious pluralism in the context of civil society in Bali, as well as the opportunities and challenges that arise amid globalisation and the tide of Westernisation. This global phenomenon not only opens up space for interfaith dialogue, but also presents challenges in the form of the commodification of rituals, a shift in traditional values, and the strengthening of individualism. Using a library-based anthropological approach, this study finds that the Muslim community in Bali has developed adaptive strategies through the practice of religious moderation, the strengthening of local wisdom, and participation in interfaith social movements. The results show that Westernisation has brought significant changes to the social interaction patterns and religious practices of the Balinese people, both through cultural acculturation and the shift in traditional values. Although the level of interfaith tolerance is relatively stable, the influence of globalisation continues to pose new challenges in maintaining local values and religious moderation. Therefore, strategies as multicultural education, revitalisation of local wisdom, and strengthening interfaith dialogue are important solutions in building a harmonious and inclusive civil society.

Keywords: religious pluralism, Islamic civilization, social movements, civil society, Bali

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas dinamika pluralisme agama di Bali dalam kerangka peradaban Islam dan gerakan sosial kontemporer. Bali mayoritas penduduknya beragama Hindu juga menjadi rumah bagi komunitas Muslim serta agama-agama lain, sehingga menghadirkan ruang interaksi lintas iman yang unik. Penelitian ini berfokus pada analisis dinamika pluralisme agama dalam konteks masyarakat madani di Bali, sekaligus peluang dan tantangan yang muncul di tengah globalisasi dan arus westernisasi. Fenomena global tersebut tidak hanya membuka ruang dialog antaragama, tetapi juga menghadirkan tantangan berupa komodifikasi ritual, pergeseran nilai tradisional, dan menguatnya individualisme. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan antropologi berbasis kajian

pustaka, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa komunitas muslim di Bali mengembangkan strategi adaptif melalui praktik moderasi beragama, penguatan kearifan lokal, serta partisipasi dalam gerakan sosial lintas agama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa westernisasi membawa perubahan signifikan terhadap pola interaksi sosial dan praktik keagamaan masyarakat Bali, baik melalui akulturasi budaya maupun pergeseran nilai tradisional. Meskipun tingkat toleransi antarumat beragama relatif stabil, pengaruh globalisasi tetap memunculkan tantangan baru dalam mempertahankan nilai-nilai lokal dan moderasi beragama. Oleh karena itu, strategi berupa pendidikan multikultural, revitalisasi kearifan lokal, serta penguatan dialog antaragama menjadi solusi penting dalam membangun masyarakat madani yang harmonis dan inklusif.

Kata Kunci: pluralisme agama, peradaban Islam, gerakan sosial, masyarakat madani, Bali

Introduction

In the era of globalisation, religious pluralism has become one of the fundamental aspects of society. Bali, as a region known for its cultural and religious diversity, is a clear example of how pluralism and multiculturalism thrive in civil society. According to Nurcholish Madjid, the concept of civil society emphasises the importance of inclusive religious life and mutual respect in diversity. However, with the tide of Westernisation and global influence, the challenge of maintaining a balance between local and international values is increasing (Madjid, 2000).

The concept of civil society has long been a theoretical framework for understanding how religious pluralism can be maintained in a democratic, inclusive and morally-based social space (Abidin, 2014). In Islam, the historical roots of civil society can be traced back to the Charter of Medina, which upholds the principles of peaceful coexistence, the protection of minority rights, and interfaith cooperation (Ahsan, 2015). Therefore, examining religious pluralism in Bali through the perspective of civil society provides an opportunity to assess the extent to which Islamic values play a role in maintaining social harmony amid the dominance of Hindu culture and the rapid pace of globalisation.

Hipolitus K. Keuwel, in his book *Pluralism, Multiculturalism, and the Limits of Tolerance*, asserts that tolerance and interfaith dialogue are important elements in a multicultural society (Keuwel, 2017). In Bali, the existence of Hindu, Islamic, Christian, Buddhist, and Confucian communities has shaped a unique social character, where efforts to maintain social harmony pose a challenge in themselves. Westernisation often brings new values that have the potential to replace or even conflict with local traditions, requiring a well-thought-out strategy to manage these differences so that they remain within the corridor of religious moderation.

Based on data from the Bali Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2022, the percentage of religious adherents in this province shows the dominance of Hinduism at around 86.91%, followed by Islam at 10.05%, Protestant Christianity at 1.67%, Catholicism at 0.87%, Buddhism at 0.47%, and Confucianism and others at around 0.03% (Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) Bali, 2022). This figure reflects the pluralism that has long been part of the social dynamics in Bali. However, the increasing number of migrants and foreign tourists has also influenced social and religious interaction patterns in Bali.

Westernisation, as one of the implications of globalisation, has had a significant impact on social and religious life in Bali. The influx of Western culture through international tourism, media and modern lifestyles has led to cultural acculturation and a shift in traditional values. Religious rituals are often commodified, while the younger generation shows individualistic tendencies that have the potential to weaken communal solidarity. This situation raises critical questions about how Balinese society, especially the Muslim community, negotiates their religious identity in the face of global modernity.

According to data from the Bali Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2022, the number of

foreign tourists visiting Bali reached 4.3 million people, an increase of 40% compared to the previous year (Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) Bali, 2022). Meanwhile, based on a survey conducted by LIPI, 62% of Balinese people feel that globalisation has influenced the way they view religion and spirituality. One of the impacts is an increasing tendency among the community, especially the younger generation, to be more open to secular thinking and to abandon religious traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation.

Westernisation has also brought about changes in cultural and economic consumption patterns. For example, religious celebrations are becoming commercialised, with religious elements being combined with global popular culture. This can be seen in the celebration of Nyepi Day, which is now also packaged as a festival and tourism promotion (Supardi, 2025). Meanwhile, for Muslims in Bali, globalisation and westernisation present their own challenges in maintaining Islamic values in daily life, especially in terms of halal lifestyle (Suaidi dkk., 2025).

The impact of Westernisation is also evident in social patterns. Research conducted by Udayana University shows that 48% of respondents admitted to experiencing changes in their social interactions due to the rise of individualistic culture (Universitas Udayana, 2023). Meanwhile, the Muslim community in Bali faces challenges in maintaining religious practices amid the expansion of the entertainment industry and modern lifestyles that are not always in line with Islamic values (Universitas Udayana, 2023). This phenomenon has created a need to build religious spaces that are more inclusive and adapt to changing times without losing the essence of religious teachings.

According to a study conducted by the Wahid Foundation, interfaith tolerance in Bali tends to be stable despite challenges from social and political dynamics (Wahid Foundation, 2021). However, external factors as global issues, identity politics, and the influence of social media have the potential to affect perceptions and interfaith relations. Therefore, a more systematic approach is needed to build social harmony amid existing diversity. TGH Fahrurrozzzi Dahlan, in his book *Dakwah dan Moderasi Beragama* (Preaching and Religious Moderation), reveals that religious moderation is key to building a harmonious and inclusive society (Dahlan, 2021). Preaching based on moderation can prevent religious conflict and create broader space for dialogue between religious adherents. In the context of Bali, this approach is particularly relevant given the high level of interaction between religious communities in the tourism and socio-economic sectors.

According to a study conducted by the Wahid Foundation, interfaith tolerance in Bali tends to be stable despite challenges from social and political dynamics (Wahid Foundation, 2021). Stable does not necessarily mean safe, given that the Religious Harmony Index standard in Indonesia is 76% and Bali only reaches 77.95% (Kementerian Agama RI, 2021). Moreover, external factors as global issues, identity politics, and the influence of social media have the potential to affect perceptions and interfaith relations.

Building on this background, this article seeks to examine the dynamics of religious pluralism and social movements within the framework of civil society in Bali. The main focus is on how negotiations take place amid Hindu dominance, the influence of Westernisation, and the role of the Muslim community in building an inclusive social space. This study uses a literature review method with an interpretive anthropological approach to understand how symbols, values, and social practices work in maintaining pluralism. Thus, this paper is expected to contribute theoretically and practically to strengthening the discourse of Islamic civilisation and social movements as the basis of civil society in contemporary Indonesia.

Method

This study utilises a literature review method enriched with interpretive anthropological analysis. A literature review was chosen because it provides a deep understanding of the dynamics of religious pluralism and social movements in Bali by examining relevant academic sources, research reports, and institutional documents. The focus of this research is not only on the description of religious pluralism, but also on the interpretation of social meanings and cultural negotiations that take place within the framework of civil society.

The data collection process was carried out by examining various primary and secondary literature sources as books and scientific journals. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the research topic through critical analysis of various perspectives and previous research findings, thereby producing a meaningful synthesis of knowledge about how religious plurality, westernisation, and globalisation are able to create a civil society, particularly in Bali. Some of the articles used as main references include those on the understanding of religious pluralism for religious broadcasters in building religious harmony (Litiloly, 2020); The concept of religious pluralism in the Qur'an: a comparative study of the interpretations in *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* and *Tafsir al-Mishbah* (Fadlilah & Rohman, 2024); religious social movements in urban and rural communities in the digital age of the 21st century (Basyari, 2022).

The theory used, namely religious pluralism, is a concept that recognises and accepts religious diversity as an inevitable reality. It emphasises the importance of mutual respect and tolerance among religious communities in a pluralistic society. As stated by Coward, every religion emerges in a pluralistic environment and shapes itself in response to that pluralism (Coward, 1989).

In Indonesia, religious pluralism is an important issue given the diversity of religions that exist. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, pluralism is a value system that recognises diversity within a nation and views it as a reality that must be accepted positively (Kementerian Agama RI, 2022). The term religious pluralism does not merely refer to the existence of diversity in beliefs (plurality), but rather to a normative attitude and perspective of accepting, respecting, and managing religious diversity as a social reality.

According to John Hick, religious pluralism is a theological approach that places religions on an equal footing in humanity's search for transcendent truth. This perspective emphasises that no single religion has a monopoly on absolute truth, but rather that all religions move towards one Ultimate Reality. Hick's thinking encourages interfaith dialogue, but on the other hand, it has been criticised for equating all religions in terms of essential truth.

In Indonesia, pluralism has drawn significant attention from Muslim scholars. Nurcholish Madjid emphasizes that pluralism is a manifestation of *sunnatullāh* (God's law), which acknowledges the diversity inherent in human life. He emphasises that pluralism is not merely recognition, but active involvement in creating a just, peaceful, and inclusive social life. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) also emphasises the importance of pluralism by proposing the idea of the indigenisation of Islam, namely how Islam in Indonesia is able to dialogue with local cultures without losing its religious essence.

However, it is important to distinguish between pluralism and plurality. Plurality refers to the reality of diversity, while pluralism is an attitude or understanding that accepts and respects that diversity. As explained by Sumanto Al Qurtuby, plurality is something natural, while pluralism is cultural and is the result of an intensive process of social interaction (Sumanto, 2019).

In Islam, perspectives on religious pluralism differ. In 2005, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) issued a *fatwa* banning pluralism, arguing that it places all religions on an equal

footing and conflicts with Islamic teachings that uphold the concept of a single truth (Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), 2005). Overall, religious pluralism requires awareness and commitment to live peacefully side by side, respecting each other's differences, in order to create harmony in a diverse society.

From an anthropological perspective, pluralism can be understood as a strategy of symbolic negotiation in which different religious groups construct shared spaces for interaction. Clifford Geertz, in his study of religion in Java, shows that religious and cultural diversity cannot be separated from local symbols that function as social glue. Thus, pluralism is not only about doctrine, but also about everyday practices, where tolerance, solidarity, and interfaith interaction determine social cohesion.

Results and Discussion

Bali as a Space for Religious Pluralism

Bali, known as the 'Island of a Thousand Temples,' has long been a shining example of harmonious religious and cultural diversity. Although the majority of its population is Hindu, Bali is also home to Muslim, Christian and Buddhist communities. This diversity is reflected in various aspects of Balinese life, including religious practices, customs and daily social interactions (Waruwu & Pramono, 2019).

One concrete example of religious harmony in Bali can be seen in the Puja Mandala area in Nusa Dua. This area is home to five different places of worship, as a Pura (Hindu temple), a mosque (Islam), a Catholic church, a Christian church, and a Vihara (Buddhist temple), which stand side by side in one complex. The existence of Puja Mandala demonstrates that religious communities in Bali can live together harmoniously, respect each other, and collaborate in various religious and social activities (Halimatusa'diah, 2018).

In addition, local wisdom values as 'Menyama Braya' (brotherhood in diversity) and 'Tat Twam Asi' (I am you, you are me) are important foundations for building harmony among religious communities in Bali. These values teach that differences in religion, ethnicity, and culture are not barriers to coexistence, but rather strengths that enrich the social and spiritual life of Balinese society (Halimatusa'diah, 2018).

Religious pluralism in Bali cannot only be understood as a contemporary phenomenon, but has deep historical roots dating back to the era of the ancient Balinese kingdoms. Based on archaeological findings at Pura Kebo Edan and Pura Pusering Jagat, there is evidence of religious diversity coexisting, ranging from Siwaism, Bhairawa Tantra, Tantrayana, Ganesha, Pasupata, Bayu, to Sora (Yoga, 2021). Each sect practiced distinct forms of worship, iconography, and rituals, yet they shared a common foundation within the religious life of ancient Balinese society.

History records that this diversity initially had the potential to cause internal conflict, as each sect competed to expand its influence and followers. However, through the initiatives of important figures as Mpu Kuturan, the various sects managed to merge into a cohesive religious system (Watra, 2018). This process was not merely a theological compromise, but also a political-religious strategy to maintain the stability of the kingdom. This gave rise to the concept of Balinese Hinduism that we know today, which is a synthesis of various sects, with an emphasis on unity in diversity (Ardiyasa dkk., 2024).

Pluralism in ancient Bali was not abstract, but institutionalised through the existence of temples as social, political and economic centres. Temples not only functioned as places of worship, but also as spaces for the integration of communities across social strata and sects. Religious ceremonies held at temples drove the people's economy, regulated political cohesion and accommodated diversity of beliefs. In other words, temples became institutional arenas that accommodated pluralism and transformed the potential for conflict between sects into collective solidarity based on spirituality.

This phenomenon can be interpreted from an anthropological perspective as a form of cultural investment that emphasised a shared vision of divinity above ritual differences. For example, pre-Hindu Balinese society worshipped the sun, mountains and ancestral spirits (Kiriana, 2021). This concept was easily absorbed and adapted by Hindus through the doctrine of Siwa Raditya (the sun as a manifestation of Siwa) and reverence for mountains as linggaphala. It was this vision of commonality that allowed pluralism to flourish without coercion, in contrast to the model of forced conversion in other regions.

From a political perspective, the pluralism of Ancient Bali shows that royal power recognised sectarian hatred as part of its legitimacy (Putra dkk., 2022). The king could not ignore certain sects because each had its own social base. Therefore, the unification of sects by Mpu Kuturan was also a form of statecraft, namely a religious political strategy aimed at maintaining the stability of the state. This indicates that pluralism was not merely a product of spiritual awareness, but also the result of institutional engineering to maintain social harmony.

However, challenges remain in maintaining this harmony, especially with the influence of globalisation and modernisation, which can affect traditional values. It is therefore important for Balinese society to continue to strengthen the values of tolerance and inclusiveness through multicultural education and interfaith dialogue (Waruwu & Pramono, 2019). The implications of this ancient Balinese experience are still felt today. The tradition of religious 'accommodation' in the form of large temples that serve as centres of multi-sect worship, as well as the philosophy of 'Menyama Braya' as a social bond, are embedded in the legacy of Old Balinese pluralism. Pluralism is not understood as a threat to identity, but rather as a treasure that legitimises the existence of an inclusive Balinese society.

Thus, the case of Ancient Bali shows that religious pluralism in Indonesia has a strong historical dimension. It is not merely a product of modernity, but the result of a long acculturation that has helped shape the pattern of civil society since the days of the kingdom. This is relevant to contemporary discourse because it shows that pluralism can survive if it is institutionalised in social, political and cultural spaces.

Westernisation and Global Multiculturalism: Civil Society Negotiations in Religious Pluralisation

The era of globalisation is characterised by the intensification of cultural, religious and traditional encounters on a transnational scale. Westernisation, as one of the dominant currents of globalisation, brings with it the values of secularism, individualism and rationality that originate from the historical experience of the West. On the other hand, global multiculturalism has emerged as a response to increasingly apparent diversity, emphasising the importance of recognition, dialogue, and cooperation between different identities. The pluralisation of religious communities should not be seen merely as a demographic reality but as a continuous process of negotiation.

Westernisation, as a global phenomenon, has had a major influence on the dynamics of religious pluralism in various parts of the world. In many cases, this process introduces modern ideas that often conflict with traditional values in religious practice. For societies that are strongly attached to their religious values, as Indonesia, Westernisation can exacerbate inter-religious tensions by giving rise to a tendency to equate modernity with Western values, which may be considered incompatible with established religious teachings. In addition, westernisation can also influence changes in the mindset of the younger generation in their view of religion, introducing the digital world as a new space for interfaith interaction and challenging traditional understandings of diversity (Sumanto, 2019).

For civil society, understood as an independent, inclusive, and participatory community, Westernisation and multiculturalism present both opportunities and challenges. Westernisation

can broaden the horizons of democracy and religious freedom, but it also has the potential to diminish spiritual values. Global multiculturalism, meanwhile, opens up space for interfaith encounters, but can also trigger identity clashes. Therefore, negotiation is a key mechanism in managing religious pluralism in the global era.

According to Anthony Giddens (1991), globalisation is the intensification of social relations at the global level, so that events occurring in one part of the world can influence practices in another. In this framework, Westernisation is one of the most prominent forms of globalisation, as it carries the values of modernity, rationality, and individualism that are characteristic of Europe and America. For various societies, Westernisation presents ambivalence. On the one hand, it provides access to the ideas of democracy, human rights, and religious freedom, which are in line with the basic principles of civil society. On the other hand, Westernisation also brings with it the values of secularism, materialism and hedonism, which are often perceived as contrary to religious teachings. Therefore, Westernisation is never fully embraced but is continuously adapted and negotiated in line with local cultural and religious values.

However, multiculturalism as a theory that has developed in modern global society has the potential to strengthen religious pluralism. Multiculturalism encourages respect for cultural and religious diversity and emphasises the importance of interfaith dialogue. However, globalization driven by Westernisation does not always align with the objectives of multiculturalism. In certain cases, Western cultural influences may generate a divide between the universal values advocated by multiculturalism and local practices rooted in particular religious beliefs and traditions. Some view that globalisation driven by mass media and digital platforms has led to a decline in traditional religious values, which has the potential to undermine interfaith harmony.

The phenomenon of Westernisation goes hand in hand with the emergence of global multiculturalism. While Westernisation emphasises the spread of Western values, multiculturalism recognises that in a connected world, different identities, traditions and religions must coexist. Stuart Hall emphasises that cultural identity in the global era is always fluid and negotiated (Harman, 2016). This means that interfaith encounters are no longer exclusive, but take place within the framework of global interconnectedness. Global multiculturalism can be seen in urban and transnational life. For example, Muslim communities in Europe not only maintain their Islamic identity, but also engage in interfaith dialogue with Christians, Jews and other religions. In Southeast Asia, international tourism and labour migration have created increasingly pluralistic societies, where religious communities are required to interact on a daily basis (Hasrianti, 2016). This process ultimately gave rise to pluralisation, namely an increase in the number of religious communities within a single social space.

Westernisation has had a tangible impact on the configuration of diversity in various parts of the world, including Indonesia. The cultural influences brought by the West have not only affected lifestyles, but also shifted patterns of interfaith interaction and fostered new forms of diversity (Mawardi, 2024). There are at least several important aspects that characterise this influence. First, global population mobility. Migration flows triggered by industrialisation and the development of modern transportation have brought communities of different faiths to live side by side in the same space. Labour migration, student flows and tourism have made large cities centres of religious encounter. This phenomenon has resulted in a previously unseen demographic diversity, allowing pluralisation to occur naturally.

Second, the secularisation of public spaces. In the Western model, religion is placed in the private sphere, while socio-political affairs are governed by secular norms. When adopted by other countries, this pattern provides relatively equal space for all religious adherents to express

their beliefs. Although often controversial, this mechanism ultimately strengthens the presence of various religions in society, as there is no single absolute dominance. Third, the commodification of religiosity. The culture of consumption that accompanies Westernisation has also changed the face of religious practice. Rituals that were previously sacred are now also seen as cultural products that can be marketed (Diwyarthi, 2010). For example, religious celebrations are promoted as tourist attractions, while the halal lifestyle trend has developed into a global economic sector. This process, although it has the potential to reduce spiritual meaning, also expands the exposure of religion in the public sphere.

Fourth, the emergence of transnational dialogue spaces. Westernisation accompanied by the globalisation of communication has given rise to international forums that bring together various religious traditions. These cross-border meetings encourage religious communities to get to know each other and negotiate their differences. Thus, pluralisation occurs not only at the local level, but also on a more complex global scale. Fifth, the transformation of the younger generation. Generation Z, as a group that grew up amid Western cultural influences, has internalised modern values, from freedom of expression to digital interaction patterns (Sugiarto dkk., 2024). This situation has given rise to a new dynamic: some choose to open themselves up to interfaith interaction, while others strengthen their religious identity as a form of resistance. Although these two tendencies are opposite in direction, they both contribute to increasingly pluralistic expressions of religion.

In general, to address this challenge, it is important for society to adopt an approach that balances the adoption of global values with respect for local values. According to Prawita, the state and society must create a space that allows for the integration of inclusive multicultural values with strong religious traditions, without sacrificing local cultural identity (Prawita dkk., 2024). One example of this can be seen in the implementation of policies that support multicultural education, which not only teaches religious tolerance but also promotes respect for diversity in social life.

The Challenges of Religious Pluralism in the Current of Globalization in Bali

Religious pluralization is often understood simply as an increase in the number of religious adherents or the emergence of new communities due to migration. However, pluralization is more accurately viewed as a process of ongoing negotiation. Bali, with its cultural and religious diversity, faces significant challenges in maintaining religious pluralism amidst globalization. Although known for its interfaith harmony, globalization has had an impact that influences the social and religious dynamics on the island.

a) The Influence of Global Culture on Local Traditions

Globalization often brings foreign cultures that can influence the traditional values of Balinese society. This process can lead to changes in religious and social practices, which have the potential to erode local cultural identity. According to Prawita et al., Bali faces the challenge of maintaining a balance between respecting the wisdom of the past and taking advantage of the opportunities offered by globalization without sacrificing its traditional cultural identity (Prawita dkk., 2024).

b) Commodification of Culture for Tourism

The tourism sector in Bali often commodifies culture and religious rituals to satisfy the tastes of tourists. Traditional practices are packaged in a way that they sometimes lose their original spiritual and cultural meaning. Prawita et al. state that cultural commodification can threaten Bali's cultural heritage, as traditional practices are reduced to mere commodities for public consumption (Prawita dkk., 2024).

c) Challenges in Preserving Religious Rituals

The younger generation in Bali faces challenges in maintaining active participation in traditional religious rituals. Factors as urbanization, modernization, and foreign cultural influences have led to a decline in the younger generation's interest in traditional religious practices. According to Astuthi et al., globalization can pose challenges to the preservation of traditional cultures, including Hindu religious rituals, due to changes in lifestyles and values influenced by global culture (Astuthi dkk., 2023).

d) Social Tension Between Religious Communities

Although Bali is known for its religious harmony, globalization can exacerbate existing social tensions. Differences in religious interpretation, religious practices, and social values can lead to conflict. Ismail states that even though Bali has a high index of religious harmony, social interactions between religious communities are not always free from problems and tensions (Ismail, 2010).

e) The Influence of Technology and Social Media

Technological developments and social media have had a significant impact on interactions between religious communities in Bali. The rapid spread of information can reinforce stereotypes and prejudices between religions, which has the potential to cause conflict. According to Astuthi et al., globalization and advances in information technology can shape social and cultural dynamics, including those related to religious pluralism(Astuthi dkk., 2023).

f) Challenges in Multicultural Education

Education in Bali needs to adapt to the challenges of globalization in order to promote the values of multiculturalism and religious tolerance. Education that is not inclusive can exacerbate social tensions and hinder efforts to preserve religious pluralism. Prawita et al. emphasize the importance of education that respects local wisdom and traditional values in facing the challenges of globalization(Prawita dkk., 2024).

Opportunities and Strategies for Strengthening Religious Pluralism in Bali

Religious pluralism in Bali is a reality rooted in a long history of intercultural, interfaith, and inter-traditional interactions. Bali, which has long been known as a center of Hindu culture, is also home to Muslim, Christian, Catholic, Buddhist, and Confucian communities. This situation makes Bali a social laboratory for the practice of pluralism in Indonesia. The history of sectarian unification during Ancient Bali by Mpu Kuturan, for example, proves that religious plurality on this island is not a new phenomenon. Through the concept of Tri Murti and the meeting at Samuan Tiga, various sects that initially had the potential to trigger conflict were successfully embraced in a cohesive religious system. This confirms that from the beginning, pluralism in Bali was not only viewed as spiritual awareness, but also as a political-religious strategy to maintain the stability of the kingdom. This historical legacy has become cultural capital for the Balinese people in viewing religious diversity as part of social unity.

In addition to historical factors, Balinese local wisdom has also become the foundation that has enabled pluralism to survive to this day. The concept of Tri Hita Karana, which emphasizes the balance of relationships between humans and God, fellow humans, and nature, provides an ethical framework that promotes social harmony. The value of menyama braya, or brotherhood, reinforces the idea that relationships between citizens are based on a spirit of mutual cooperation and togetherness, rather than differences in faith. In everyday practice, this local wisdom is manifested in fluid social interactions, where Hindus and Muslims, for example, help each other in traditional ceremonies and other social needs. Local wisdom is thus an important instrument in maintaining pluralism amid the currents of modernization and globalization.

Bali, as a region with cultural and religious diversity, has a great opportunity to strengthen religious pluralism through a holistic and inclusive approach. One of the main opportunities is the strengthening of multicultural education, which can serve as a foundation for building understanding and tolerance among religious communitiesA dialogical pedagogical approach that fosters active citizenship and social harmony is particularly relevant in Bali, a region deeply rooted in local cultural values (Akar, 2016). In addition, the utilization of Balinese

local wisdom in interfaith dialogue also presents a great opportunity. Traditions as Male, Ngejot, Rebana, and Mekepung, which have become part of Balinese society, have the potential to strengthen interfaith relations, especially between Hindus and Muslims in Bali (Saihu, 2020a).

The empowerment of traditional villages as a basis for pluralism also needs special attention. Traditional villages in Bali play an important role in preserving cultural and religious identity, and can be a force for strengthening interfaith harmony through the role of awig-awig (traditional rules). The empowerment of traditional villages can be achieved by increasing community participation in the development process and strengthening the role of local culture and religion in facing the challenges of globalization (Suriata & Antara, 2022). In addition, the implementation of religious moderation involving all levels of society is also a strategy that needs to be further promoted. Through the dissemination of the idea of religious moderation, the people of Bali can better understand and implement the principles of tolerance in their daily lives (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

Another strategy is the use of media, both mass media and social media, to promote messages of tolerance and harmony among religious communities. The media plays a strategic role in shaping public opinion and educating the public about the importance of living in diversity. By increasing media literacy and using digital platforms to spread messages of peace, religious pluralism can be strengthened in Bali (Akar, 2016). In addition, interfaith collaboration in social and cultural activities can also strengthen social bonds and mutual understanding. Mutual assistance activities, cultural festivals, and humanitarian programs involving people of different faiths can strengthen solidarity and harmony in Bali (Saihu, 2020b).

Tourism as the global face of Bali also opens up opportunities for strengthening pluralism. Thousands of tourists from various religious backgrounds come every year and interact with the local community, making the island an international meeting point for different faiths. Phenomena as Puja Mandala in Nusa Dua, which places places of worship for five major religions in one area, symbolizes Bali's openness to diversity. There is indeed a risk of commodification of rituals when religious practices are turned into tourist attractions, but at the same time, tourism provides space for interfaith education and broadens people's understanding of global pluralism (Walad dkk., 2024). Bali serves not only as a tourist destination but also as a hub for transnational dialogue.

The existence of the Balinese Muslim community also demonstrates a tangible form of cultural adaptation. For centuries, Muslim villages as Pegayaman, Serangan, and Kampung Jawa in Denpasar have exhibited a unique pattern of coexistence. They maintain their Islamic identity, but at the same time blend with Hindu culture in their social life. This model proves that religious moderation is not merely a discourse, but a way of life rooted in society. The presence of Balinese Muslims who are actively involved in interfaith social activities reinforces pluralism as a productive social reality.

However, the opportunities for pluralism will not last without a clear strategy. Multicultural education is one of the main instruments. The younger generation in Bali needs to be educated to understand that diversity is a necessity that must be nurtured, not a threat to be avoided. Formal and non-formal education can integrate the values of religious moderation and local wisdom, so that Generation Z, living in the midst of globalization, can internalize an attitude of tolerance and critical thinking (Ayu Kristini Putri dkk., 2023). In addition, revitalizing local wisdom is also important. The values of Tri Hita Karana and menyama braya can be repackaged through cultural festivals, interfaith arts, or cultural exchanges to remain relevant to the needs of the times.

Interfaith social movements can also be a strategic space for strengthening pluralism. Activities as reforestation, beach cleanups, or disaster management can be used as arenas for

interfaith collaboration, where social solidarity is prioritized over identity barriers. Thus, pluralism does not stop at the symbolic realm, but is manifested in concrete actions that strengthen social cohesion. Another equally important strategy is the management of spirituality-based tourism. The celebrations of Nyepi, Galungan, and Eid al-Fitr can be directed not only as internal rituals, but also as moments of interfaith education, where local communities and tourists alike learn about the values of harmony.

The digital space has now become a new arena for pluralism. Bali's young generation, who are active on social media, can play a role as ambassadors of pluralism through the production of content that emphasizes tolerance, stories of harmony, and narratives of diversity. The virtual world, which was previously often a place of polarization, can now be transformed into a vehicle for spreading the values of togetherness. Finally, the role of the government and religious organizations is also crucial. The Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB), which is active in Bali, needs to be continuously strengthened as a forum for dialogue, while regional policies must consistently accommodate all religions in the public sphere (Panuju & Kontiarta, 2019). Collaboration between the state, traditional leaders, and religious leaders will ensure that pluralism is not just a slogan, but also an institutional reality.

From the perspective of religious anthropology, pluralism in Bali shows that religion not only regulates the vertical relationship between humans and God, but also serves as a social instrument that is constantly negotiated. As Stuart Hall emphasized, cultural identity is fluid and constantly negotiated. This is reflected in the way Balinese society manages pluralism: always open to change, yet rooted in traditional values. Pluralism in Bali must ultimately be understood as a dynamic process that requires conscious effort, not as a static condition that exists on its own.

Implications for the Future

Religious pluralism in Bali holds important implications for the future, particularly amid social and cultural transformations driven by globalization. Despite Bali's reputation for religious harmony, factors such as foreign cultural influences, shifting perspectives among the younger generation, and the commodification of culture may influence the evolving dynamics of pluralism. The younger generation in Bali, who are increasingly exposed to the tide of globalization, are showing changes in their mindset and interest in traditional religious practices. Nurhasanah states that globalization changes mindsets to be more advanced and modern, but it can also lead to a decline in interest in traditional religious rituals (Nurhasanah & Suardana, 2021). This has the potential to threaten the preservation of religious practices that have become part of Bali's cultural identity.

In addition, the commodification of culture for tourism purposes can diminish the spiritual and cultural significance of traditional religious practices. Prawita et al. highlight that the commodification of culture can threaten Bali's cultural heritage, as traditional practices are reduced to mere commodities for public consumption. (Prawita dkk., 2024). However, religious pluralism also opens up opportunities to strengthen social harmony and build peace. From a theological perspective, religions can work together to create a more harmonious world by emphasizing universal values as love, tolerance, and peace. The concepts of inclusivism and interfaith dialogue are key to resolving differences and building understanding and mutual respect among religious adherents.

To address these challenges, it is important to integrate inclusive multicultural education, utilize local wisdom in interfaith dialogue, and empower traditional villages as a basis for pluralism. The implementation of religious moderation and the use of media in promoting harmony are also important strategies in strengthening religious pluralism in Bali. With a comprehensive approach, religious pluralism in Bali can become a force that strengthens social

harmony and unity in the future.

Conclusion

Religious pluralism in Bali is a phenomenon that continues to develop amid globalization, Westernization, and global multiculturalism. Although the level of tolerance among religious communities in Bali tends to be stable, the influence of foreign cultures and social changes due to modernization bring new challenges in maintaining social harmony. Westernization has caused a shift in traditional values and religious practices, which on the one hand enriches social interaction, but on the other hand has the potential to erode the cultural and spiritual identity of the Balinese people.

However, amid these challenges, there are great opportunities to strengthen religious pluralism through a more inclusive approach, as multicultural education, strengthening local wisdom values, and promoting interfaith dialogue. Religious moderation is also an important strategy in building a harmonious and inclusive civil society. With synergy between the community, government, and religious institutions, Bali can continue to be a model of peaceful and sustainable religious diversity in Indonesia.

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