



The Socio-Historical Study of Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB) and Its Contribution to the Creation of Religious Harmony in Kediri

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Abstract

This study explores the socio-historical development of the Interfaith Harmony Forum (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama/ FKUB) and its contribution to sustaining religious harmony in Kediri City, East Java. Kediri, historically a multicultural hub since the Airlangga Kingdom (11th century) and later shaped by Hindu-Buddhist traditions, Dutch colonial missions, and Islamic boarding-school culture, remains one of Indonesia's most tolerant cities. Using a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach, the article examines how FKUB—founded in 1998 as a response to the May 1998 riots—together with the Paguyuban Antar Umat Beragama dan Penghayat Kepercayaan (PAUB/PKUB), the Faculty of Ushuluddin of IAIN Kediri (now UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri), and the youth-focused Paguyuban Lintas Masyarakat (PaLM), has mediated interfaith tensions,

promoted dialogue, and organized inclusive social programs. The findings reveal that these institutions have significantly reduced religious conflict, strengthened social cohesion, and enhanced Kediri's Harmony Index—reaching 3.91 in 2019 and keeping the city among Indonesia's top-ten most tolerant. The study highlights that historical inclusivity, continuous dialogue, youth engagement, and state-community collaboration are key to sustaining religious moderation and offer a transferable model for other plural societies.

Keywords: FKUB, Kediri City, religious harmony, religious moderation, interfaith dialogue, socio-historical.

A. INTRODUCTION

Kediri City has a rich historical background, making it a city with a high level of diversity. Its population is Muslim (91.45%), followed by Christians (5.72%), Catholics (2.29%), and the remainder are Hindus, Buddhists, and Confucians, as well as adherents of religious beliefs. However, these differences rarely give rise to major conflicts thanks to the long tradition of tolerance maintained by the community. This article aims to examine how religious moderation is created and implemented in Kediri City through government policies, the role, and the strengthening of values of tolerance. Using a historical and analytical approach, this article offers insights into a model of harmony that can be applied in other regions in Indonesia. Subakir et al. (2019) stated that there are several potential conflicts that become factors of disharmony in religion, including political factors, economic factors, cultural/locality and ethnicity, and religious factors. In the era of multiculturalism, equality can be problematic, especially

when framed in terms of majority-minority relations. The former group feels they have privileges that must be tolerated by the latter. This kind of tolerance is the same as coercion and often triggers conflict (Subakir et al., 2019).

Religious harmony is an important foundation in maintaining social and political stability in Indonesia. In the last two decades, this field has become a major focus and priority program of the government, observed not only by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, therefore some of its implementation of Religious Moderation (*moderasi beragama*) is not only a priority program of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, but is also found across Ministries such as the Ministry of Home Affairs (*Departemen Dalam Negeri*), the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*), and even the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs (*Menkopolhukam*). Kediri City, as one of the cities in East Java, has demonstrated success in building harmony between religious communities. This is reflected in the high harmony index, minimal religious-based social conflict, and national recognition of the role of religious institutions in this city. This study examines the role of FKUB, PKUB, and the Faculty of Ushuluddin IAIN Kediri in forming and maintaining this harmony.

Religious politics became increasingly worrying during the 2019 elections, marked by political divisions tinged with religious ideological friction, even as if Indonesian society were divided into two camps, each spreading hate speech, hoaxes, and often persecuting different groups (Subakir et al., 2019). Kediri is a relatively pluralistic region consisting of regencies and cities in East Java and has intense contact with the outside world due to Kediri's history as a center of social

interaction dating back to the Airlangga Kingdom in the 11th century. This kingdom became a meeting point for Hindu-Buddhist culture that flourished in East Java. In later periods, historical sites such as Setono Gedong Temple and Tjio Hwie Kiong Temple show traces of religious pluralism that has persisted for centuries. Furthermore, Dutch colonialism also had a significant influence on the structure of Kediri society. The presence of Christian missionaries and the construction of churches created new dynamics in the city's religious life. Although these different religions entered Kediri at different times, the people of Kediri demonstrated an ability to coexist. Setiyani (2024) said that inclusive traditional communities (Siman) are pluralistic, open and do not consider 'others' as a threat so that the community is able to adapt and live side by side with its surroundings.

B. THE ORIGIN OF FKUB: ANSWERING THE CHALLENGES OF DIVERSITY

Kediri City is known as one of the most tolerant and safe cities in Indonesia. Its titles as "Santri City" and "Safest City" are the result of synergy between religious institutions and the local government. This study aims to examine the establishment of the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB), the Center for Interfaith Harmony (PKUB), and the Faculty of Ushuluddin IAIN Kediri and their contribution to harmonious religious life. The method used is a qualitative study with a descriptive-analytical approach. The results of the study indicate that these three institutions play an active role in forming an inclusive, tolerant, and religious social ecosystem,

which helps strengthen Kediri City's image as a santri city and the safest city in Indonesia.

The establishment of FKUB (Interfaith Harmony Forum) known as *Forum Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama dan Penghayat Kepercayaan* in Kediri began with a joint interfaith prayer on July 8, 1998, as a form of concern for the May 1998 riots and was initiated by three prominent figures, namely K.H. Anwar Iskandar, K.H. Imam Yahya Malik, and Amien Djoenaidi. This activity was held at the Islamic University of Kadiri (UNISKA) as a form of response to the national socio-political situation after the May 1998 riots. This joint prayer received widespread support from various religious and community leaders in Kediri City. Seeing this enthusiasm, the religious leaders decided to form an official organization called the Interfaith Harmony Forum and Belief Adherents *Forum Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama dan Penghayat Kepercayaan* (FKUB) on July 28, 1998. FKUB became a forum for interfaith and belief communication, with the main goal of creating harmony through a cultural approach.

Initially, FKUB membership was dominated by members of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). However, over time, Muhammadiyah and the Indonesian Islamic Propagation Institute known as *Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia* (LDII) joined on September 3, 2001, making FKUB more inclusive and representative. To control the organization, H. Ma'ruf Anas, who was then the secretary of the PCNU Kediri, was elected as the first chairman, followed by H. Moh Salim. FKUB activities in its early days focused on simple approaches such as communal meals without formal dialogue forums. Its primary goal was

to build closeness and trust among members in a relaxed yet meaningful atmosphere.

In the reformation era, the issues of ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations *Suku, Agama, Ras, dan Antar Golongan* (SARA) have become a serious threat to national stability. In response, the government has established the Interfaith Harmony Forum known as *Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama* (FKUB) as a strategic partner in maintaining harmony. In Kediri, the FKUB was officially established in 2000, involving six religious groups: Islam, Hinduism, Catholicism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism. The FKUB plays a role in facilitating interfaith dialogue and acting as a liaison between the community and the government on issues of diversity.

The Interfaith Community *Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama* (PKUB) in Kediri plays a strategic role in strengthening religious moderation, making it a driving force for harmony amidst diversity. As a dialogue forum, the PAUB provides a safe and inclusive space for interfaith leaders to discuss sensitive issues that have the potential to trigger conflict. Through a dialogue-based and deliberative approach, the FKUB has successfully mediated various issues, such as the establishment of places of worship, which often become a source of friction in society, and the spread of religion-based hoaxes that can threaten social harmony. Beyond its role in conflict mediation, the FKUB is also actively involved in interfaith social programs that strengthen community solidarity. Activities such as fundraising for disaster victims, tolerance training, and anti-intolerance campaigns demonstrate the FKUB's commitment to building sustainable

harmony. These programs not only support the creation of good relations between religious communities but also raise public awareness of the importance of living in diversity.

The success of the FKUB is evident in the minimal religious conflict in Kediri City, an achievement inextricably linked to the commitment of its members and the support of the wider community. However, challenges remain. The politicization of religion is one of the greatest threats that can undermine harmony. Furthermore, the widespread spread of religious hoaxes through social media demands a more rapid and strategic response. Furthermore, the regeneration of interfaith leaders is also a crucial concern, given that the sustainability of religious moderation requires the active participation of the younger generation.

To address these challenges, the FKUB needs to strengthen its institutions, including increasing the capacity of its members and expanding its collaborative network with the government, civil society organizations, and the media. Utilizing digital technology is also an urgent strategic step to disseminate messages of tolerance and moderation and counter-narratives of intolerance that frequently emerge in the public sphere. Amid the threat of intolerance and radicalism, religious moderation is a non-negotiable necessity. Kediri City, with its long history of upholding the value of tolerance, has demonstrated that diversity can be managed harmoniously. FKUB, as the vanguard in maintaining harmony, demonstrates that dialogue, solidarity, and interfaith cooperation are key to creating a peaceful life. With a continuously strengthened commitment, FKUB has the potential to become an inspiring model for other regions in managing diversity constructively.

In building harmony in religious life in Kediri City, the Interfaith and Belief Community Association known as *Paguyuban Antar Umat Beragama dan Penganut Kepercayaan* (PAUB-PK), and the Interfaith Harmony Forum, known as *Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama* (FKUB), together with the government, private sector, TNI, and POLRI, often hold meetings and activities whose locations are moved and rotated according to the deliberations (Subakir et al., 2019). The activity was attended by religious figures, government, private sector, TNI, and POLRI, who were present. The invitation also involved institutions such as mass organizations, community leaders, universities, banks, and other institutions, even institutions at the village level down to the RT. In general, the 2019 Interfaith Harmony Index *Indeks Kerukunan Umat Beragama* (KUB) in Kediri City was at 3.91 (High), up from 3.76 (High) in 2018. For the people of Kediri City, religious differences are a social capital that functions as a social glue without denying the potential for inter-religious conflict (Subakir et al., 2019). Based on the tabulation of the work program of FKUB in Medan city, it has been proven effective in consolidating religious communities and is recommended to be made a routine activity, either weekly or monthly, through dialogue, collaboration, and this inclusive approach strengthens emotional unity and social ties (Pratama and Harahap, 2024).

In carrying out this role, the PKUB of Kediri City in organizing interfaith dialogue, social service, and public education by the community can be interpreted as two media that run simultaneously, firstly as a connector between the organizers of government functions that all have the goal

of achieving programs in the community that require a unified blend between different functions in the respective government and service duties, while the second role can be utilized by the community, at least represented by its figures who are incarnated in the FKUB community to absorb convey the public's desires in a real and directly received by each government organizer in the different functions. Even more than that, this dialogue process can also be interpreted at least symbolically to ward off deviations between government organizers and the community itself.

The real results that emerged from the process of this continuous dialogue implemented the Kediri City government and the conduciveness of the harmonious relationship between religious communities in this city well maintained, even this goodness made the City receive several appreciations for what was done by the government above it, or by several observers and actors and activists of civic society in expressing their appreciation, therefore Kediri became a national reference in the practice of tolerance.

The Faculty of Ushuluddin IAIN Kediri, which, in the following changes, became STAIN KEDIRI, IAIN Kediri, and finally, based on Presidential Decree 45 of 2025, changed to UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri, can really contribute through academic research, community service, and the formation of moderate religious human resources. Also, the naming of UIN in Kediri using the name of Syekh Wasil is a real proof of the treatment and recognition of local figures who are respected in the community therefore it can be interpreted not as a symbol that this institution is indeed rooted in a pluralistic society like Kediri City.

C. PALM: FOCUS ON YOUTH AS THE NEXT GENERATION

As the strategic implementation of FKUB brings with it the consequences of many social roles that can be carried out, to provide a more specific role for the younger generation, FKUB formed PaLM (Paguyuban Lintas Masyarakat) to accommodate the young generation of interfaith to design social activities involving different religious communities. PaLM was founded in 2010, chaired by Taufiq Alamin, a lecturer at the Faculty of Ushuluddin IAIN Kediri. Subakir et al. (2019) stated that PaLM strives to be a forum for interfaith youth dialogue so that tolerant and harmonious religious understanding can be maintained across generations. Therefore, PaLM regularly holds Multicultural Schools attended by youth from various religions and sects. This organization exists with a primary focus on fostering the young generation of interfaith, making it different from the Forum for Interfaith Harmony Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB), and the Association of Interfaith Communities and Believers known as *Paguyuban Antar Umat Beragama dan Penghayat Kepercayaan* (PAUB-PK), which involves more senior figures.

Religion is a teaching that humans use as a guide for life, both in thinking, acting, and worship (Subakir, 2020). PaLM aims to develop young cadres with moderate, pluralistic characters and openness to diversity. PaLM's programs emphasize tolerance education and interfaith dialogue, specifically designed for the younger generation. With a dynamic and relevant approach, PaLM strives to create young leaders capable of maintaining harmony in a diverse society.

Through various activities, such as interfaith leadership training, multicultural discussions, and social action, PaLM

provides a space for young people to learn from each other and understand differences. This approach not only strengthens tolerance but also ensures the regeneration of interfaith leaders who can continue efforts to maintain harmony in the future. The existence of PaLM proves that building religious moderation can begin with the younger generation as a key pillar of sustainable social harmony. Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Home Affairs Number 9 of 2006/Number 8 of 2006 firmly states that maintaining interfaith harmony is a shared responsibility of religious communities, regional governments, and the central government.

Some of the achievements achieved by the City of Kediri in the last 10 years in creating harmony in community life in the city of Kediri, which are manifested in various appreciations, can be mentioned, including the following: first, the presence of large Islamic boarding schools such as Lirboyo and Ploso strengthens Islamic identity. Second, the Livable City Index reached 79.83% (Top Tier City). Third, Kediri is among the top 10 most tolerant cities according to the Setara Institute. Fourth, there has been no interfaith conflict in the past decade. Fifth, the FKUB of Sukoharjo and other regions conducted a comparative study in Kediri.

Kediri City is a clear example of the success of religious moderation in managing plurality. With the support of government policies, the role of institutions such as the PAUB, and a strong tradition of tolerance, Kediri can maintain harmony despite facing various challenges. Religious moderation in Kediri demonstrates that dialogue, cooperation, and respect for differences are key to creating a peaceful and

inclusive society. Pakelan Village is one of the villages located in Kediri City that practices harmony and tolerance. This is reflected in a harmonious social life and is realized by the involvement of residents from various religious backgrounds in carrying out other religious activities (Wulandari et al., 2024). Meanwhile, according to Munif et al. (2024), the dynamics of religious harmony in Kediri City are reflected in several forms, including the existence and recognition of religious organizations and religious sects in Kediri City.

In 2021, Kediri City ranked 10th among the most tolerant cities with a score of 5.733. In 2022, Kediri City rose significantly to 5th among the most tolerant cities with a score of 5.850. In 2023, Kediri City became the 7th most tolerant city in Indonesia. In 2023, there was a decline in ranking, but when viewed in terms of scores, it still rose because other cities/regencies also experienced increases in scores. The ranking achieved by Kediri City demonstrates the synergy of all elements that are increasingly mature in promoting tolerance. The RPJMD and the Government Work Plan known as *Rencana Kerja Pemerintah* (RKP) of Kediri City serve as the main benchmarks for promoting tolerance through the vision of implementing religious teachings and/or beliefs in a community life full of tolerance, harmony, and peace. Going forward, efforts to strengthen moderation must continue through education, strengthening institutions, and increasing community participation. Thus, Kediri can continue to be a model for other cities that want to maintain harmony amidst diversity.

D. Conclusion

The index assessment of a tolerant city is based on four variables with eight assessment indicators. First, city government regulations, with two indicators, and Kediri City scored 4.50 on the RPJMD indicator and 6.50 on the discriminatory policy indicator. Second, social regulations are assessed based on two indicators. Kediri City scored 6.50 on the intolerance incident indicator and 6.00 on the community dynamics indicator. Third, government actions, with indicators of city government public statements and concrete actions. Kediri City scored 6.00 on the government's public statements and 5.00 on the concrete actions indicator. Fourth, socio-religious demographics, with indicators of religious heterogeneity scoring 5.00 and socio-religious inclusion scoring 6.00.

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