

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN BUILDING THE PARADOXICAL LIFE OF INDONESIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract. The issue of exclusivity in religion often becomes an arena to destroy inclusive life in society. Exclusivity in religion often leads a person or group of people to judge others who are different from themselves. Judgment of others leads to an attitude of judgment and the fading of compassion in society. Judgemental attitudes towards one another increase when identity politics spread in society. This condition shows a lack of understanding of religion in society. Religion includes the belief system and values of one's life, which leads to the concept of identity and one's calling in life in society. The author sees the significance of religious education in Indonesian society to build a paradoxical life because of the diversity of religions. Paradox leads to an exclusive and inclusive attitude. Exclusive in terms of religiosity helps a person understand themselves well, and inclusive in terms of relationships that help them interact with others in daily life and society. The author will use a method of comparison between the theory of identity in religion and religious ideology to unify a nation. A good religious education will help a person to understand himself and others well as creation and how they can relate to one another in the midst of diversity. The unity of life in society is not based on religious or identity similarity but rather a call to love one another to build a life of solidarity with one another.

Keywords: Religion; Exclusivity; Inclusiveness; Identity; Life Calling

INTRODUCTION

The issue of exclusivity in the context of religion has been the focus of much debate in society, including Indonesia. Exclusivity is often a barrier to developing an inclusive and respectful society. This article will explain how exclusivity in religion can affect the perception of individual identity and how religious education can play a role in overcoming the paradoxical life in Indonesian society. Exclusivity in the context of religion is often a source of conflict and disharmony in society. Exclusivity allows each individual or group to make judgments and even judge others who are different in belief because they have a different identity. This slowly fades the sense of compassion and solidarity in the community, especially in uniting them. In the context of Indonesian society, which is rich in religious diversity, religious education must shape an inclusive and harmonious life. In an increasingly complex and diverse global environment, the issue of exclusivity in religious contexts has become a major concern in debates in various societies, including in Indonesia. Exclusivity refers to a view or attitude that assumes only a certain group or belief is right while others are considered wrong or irrelevant. In many cases, exclusivity in religion has led to challenges in creating inclusive societies that respect differences and promote interfaith cooperation.[] Exclusivity in religion leads one to a closed identity and separates oneself from others. People perceived as identifying differently from themselves are discriminated against, marginalized, or even separated from the communities they are

supposed to support. This impacts the individual's emotional and psychological well-being, limiting opportunities to interact with and learn from those who are different. Religious education has an important role in overcoming exclusivity's negative impact. By integrating inclusive values and respect for differences, religious education can help shape a broader view of religious diversity. Moreover, religious education focusing on a deeper understanding of each religion's teachings and interfaith dialogue can open the door to better understanding and mutual respect.

In Indonesia, efforts to address exclusivity in religious contexts have become integral to broader interfaith education and dialogue. Various civil society organizations, educational institutions, and religious leaders have collaborated to promote inclusive approaches to religion. For example, interfaith forums and dialogue activities have been held to facilitate open discussions about the differences and similarities between different religions.

METHODS

This article uses a comparative method to analyze identity theory in the context of religion and how religious ideology can be a unified tool in a nation. A qualitative approach is used to understand the role of religious education in building an inclusive understanding of identity and relations amid diversity.

Comparative Method

A comparative method is an analytical approach that aims to compare and contrast elements of two or more different groups, cases, or contexts to identify common patterns, differences, or similarities between them. In the context of this article, the comparative method is used to analyze identity theory in its religious dimension and identify ways in which religious ideology can act as a unifying factor in the context of the nation. In this research, the author compares people with strong religious identities. By comparing the characteristics, values, and religious practices of various groups, the research aims to explore the similarities and differences in how they integrate religious identity into national identity and how this affects the unity of society.

Qualitative Approach

A qualitative approach is used to understand the role of religious education in building an inclusive understanding of identity and relationships within the framework of societal diversity. This approach emphasizes an in-depth understanding of individuals' meanings, perceptions, and experiences and how contextual factors influence their views on identity and relationships. In addition, content analysis is used to analyze text documents such as religious education curricula, religious texts, and educational materials used in formulating understandings of identity and relationships. Through content analysis, researchers can identify the messages transmitted through religious education and how these messages contribute to building inclusive or exclusive understandings. By combining a comparative method and a qualitative approach, this article provides in-depth insights into how religious identity theory is applied in practice and how religious education can shape inclusive or exclusive understandings of identity and relationships in a diverse society. Through this approach, this article can contribute to our understanding of

the important role of religious ideology in shaping unity in a nation and how religious education can build an inclusive understanding that respects the diversity of identities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Exclusivity and Identity Paradox

Exclusivity in religion often leads to judgment and condemnation of individuals or groups with different beliefs. This can lead to incomprehension and even conflict in society. Identity politics can reinforce these exclusionary attitudes, reducing the understanding of the true essence of religion and individual identity.

1. Exclusivity in the Context of Religion

Definition of Exclusivity in Religion

Religious exclusivity refers to the view that only one belief or teaching is right while others are wrong. This often leads to judgment and condemnation of individuals or groups with different views. A classic example is the conflict between monotheistic religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, where each claims to be the "true religion" with the exclusivity of their beliefs. Religious exclusivity can result in ignorance and intolerance towards other religions and beliefs. A limited understanding of spiritual diversity can hinder inter-group dialogue and collaboration, potentially sparking violent conflict.

Social Divisions: Exclusivity can reinforce social and ethnic divisions in society. Faith-based conflicts often involve the oppression and marginalization of minority groups, undermining the social fabric.

Inhibition of Progress: When religion is seen as the sole source of knowledge and truth, it can inhibit scientific and intellectual progress. Developing science and critical thinking is often seen as threatening religious exclusivity.

2. The Politics of Identity and Exclusivity

Identity Politics and its Effects

Identity politics refers to utilizing a particular group's identity-such as religion, ethnicity, or culture, to achieve political goals. Although initially aimed at fighting for group rights and interests, identity politics can lead to harmful exclusivity.

The Negative Impact of Exclusionary Identity Politics

Polarisation and Conflict: Identity politics focusing on exclusivity can lead to polarization and conflict. The manipulation of emotions and the division of society based on identity can lead to political and social instability.

Reducing Identity Complexity: An excessive focus on a particular identity can reduce the complexity of an individual's identity. A person is not made up of just one aspect of identity but many interconnected aspects.

Ignores Contextual Issues: Exclusionary identity politics often ignore more pressing contextual issues, such as the economy, environment, and education. Priority is placed on identity defense, while real issues are neglected.

3. Paradoxes of Identity and Inclusivity

The paradox is how exclusivity that isolates and limits can synergize with the

principle of inclusivity that embraces diversity.

Overcoming the Paradox Through Education and Dialogue: Through education that promotes broad religious, cultural, and historical understanding, as well as interfaith dialogue, this paradox can be overcome. Education empowers individuals to see the value of diversity and respect differences.

Building Bridges Across Identities: Creating spaces for interaction between different identity groups can help build bridges that transcend differences. Collaborative activities and projects across identities can build friendships and deeper understanding.

Leaders and Role Models: Religious, political, and community leaders have an important role in influencing people's views and behavior. Leaders who demonstrate inclusivity in their actions and rhetoric can inspire positive change.[Barbara Mae Gayle. (2013). Derek Cortez and Raymond W. Preiss, "Safe Spaces, Difficult Dialogues, and Critical Thinking. International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. IJ-SoTL, Vol. No. 2, Art. 5, pp. 4-6.]

4. Role of Religious Education

Religious education plays an important role in overcoming this identity paradox. A good education can help individuals understand the true essence of religion and its inclusive values. It also enables them to see diversity as a wealth rather than an obstacle. Religious education that includes a deep understanding of identity and universal human values can shape a more tolerant and inclusive generation.[Sabrina Jafralie and Arzina Zaver. (2019). Teaching Religious Education: The Ethics and Religious Culture Program As Case Study. FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education. Vol. 5, Iss. 1, 2019, pp. 97-100.]

- **Understanding the True Essence of Religion**

Good religious education provides theoretical knowledge of religious doctrines and rituals and helps individuals understand the true essence of their religious teachings. This involves recognizing compassion, empathy, peace, and justice in religious teachings. In this context, religious education can help go beyond surface differences and bridge interfaith understanding.

- **Viewing Diversity as Wealth**

One of the main obstacles in overcoming the identity paradox is the negative perception of diversity. Religious education can serve as a tool to help individuals see diversity as a wealth rather than an obstacle. By teaching stories of unity in diversity, religious education can stimulate an appreciation of cultural and religious variations, reducing prejudice and conflict.

- **Inclusive Religious Education**

Inclusive religious education means recognizing and respecting various religious beliefs and practices. It involves teaching about different religions and spiritual views without discriminating against or glorifying one religion. Inclusive

education also includes social and cultural aspects in the context of religion, helping students understand the role of religion in shaping individual and societal identity.

- **Identity and Universal Human Values**

Effective religious education should focus on religious understanding and address universal human values relevant to all faiths. Concepts such as human dignity, social justice, tolerance, and peace are important in various religions. Inclusive religious education should emphasize the similarities of these values among various religious traditions.

- **Shaping a Tolerant and Inclusive Generation**

The ultimate goal of effective religious education is to form a generation that deeply understands religion, identity, and inclusive values. Individuals who are well educated in this regard tend to be more open to diverse views, more tolerant of differences, and more able to cooperate with individuals from different backgrounds. This will help create a more harmonious and sustainable society.

Theories of Identity in Religion

- Identity theory in religion addresses how religion can shape and mold individual and group identities. Religious identity is integral to a person's identity and can influence their views, values, and behavior. However, sometimes religious identity is perceived exclusively, where individuals only identify with a particular religion and tend to feel isolated from others of different faiths. This is the starting point for divisions and tensions.
- However, through a more inclusive approach to religious identity, people can understand that it is part of a larger complexity in one's life. In this perspective, religious identity is integrated with ethnic, cultural, and social identities. This allows individuals to see themselves as citizens of a world with many interconnected aspects of identity, not just as adherents of a particular religion. This approach helps to break down exclusive boundaries in viewing others, thus paving the way for more positive interactions and cooperation.

Religious Ideology as a Unifying Tool

- Religious ideology refers to a set of beliefs, values, and goals shared by members of a religion or religious group. These ideologies are often the basis for communities to unite, cooperate and achieve common goals. However, problems arise when religious ideology differentiates between those who "belong" and those who "do not belong." Exclusivity in religious ideologies can lead to rejecting other individuals or groups with different views or beliefs.
- One approach that can be taken to overcome exclusivity in religious ideology is to promote the principles of inclusivity and tolerance. This does not mean ignoring differences in beliefs but recognizing that diversity of views is a fact in an increasingly connected society. By considering the common ground values held by different religions, such as moral ethics, empathy, and compassion, society can create space for dialogue and mutually beneficial exchange of ideas.

Fusing Identity Theory and Religious Ideology

Combining identity theory in religion with religious ideology as a unifying tool can help overcome exclusivity. Through this approach, people can understand that. Religious identity is not a barrier to interacting and cooperating with individuals from different backgrounds. In this age of globalization and interconnectivity, religious identity and ideology differences are often a source of conflict and tension in society. Exclusivity, a narrow view that sees religious identity or ideology as a barrier to interacting with individuals from different backgrounds, can limit the potential for cooperation and harmony among diverse communities. Therefore, an approach that combines identity theory in religion with religious ideology as a unifying tool has great potential to overcome exclusivity and promote inclusivity in society. This paper will explore these concepts in greater depth and outline how their incorporation can help create better understanding, more productive cooperation, and greater harmony amidst societal diversity.

Combining identity theory in religion with religious ideology can also inspire collaboration in social action that benefits society. When individuals from different religious backgrounds work together for a noble cause, such as poverty eradication, environmental care, or improving the quality of education, it creates opportunities to build deeper relationships and expand mutual understanding. Collaboration in social action reminds us that religious ideology should not only be a tool for the benefit of a particular group but also to impact society as a whole positively. It can help demonstrate that religious identity does not always have to be a divider but can also be a powerful connecting force to create social change that benefits everyone.

CONCLUSION

Deep, open, and inclusive religious education can overcome exclusivity in religion. Identity theory in religion and religious ideology can be a driving force in building an inclusive life. Indonesians must understand that harmony is not the result of sameness but mutual love and respect. In a society as rich in diversity as Indonesia, overcoming exclusivity in religion is crucial to building a strong and harmonious inclusive society. When properly directed, religious education has great potential to transform exclusive attitudes into inclusive ones by providing a better understanding of identity, universal values, and diversity. Integrating identity theory in religion and religious ideology can take this effort to the next level by creating a strong foundation for interfaith cooperation and improved social intergroup relations. Through education, dialogue, and deeper understanding, Indonesia can embrace a future of greater inclusiveness, compassion, and solidarity.

In conclusion, exclusivity in religion must be overcome with an education that supports a healthy understanding of identity and the ability to interact inclusively. Only by understanding the core values of religions and applying them in daily life can people build harmonious lives, respect diversity, and promote true compassion and solidarity.

Some practical improvements need to be made in shaping a paradoxical society.

1. Reinterpretation of Religious Identity: Identity theory can be used to reformulate the meaning of religious identity so that it does not feel threatening to different identities. This can help overcome the fear of exclusivity.

2. Identity-Based Education: Religious education incorporating elements of identity theory can help individuals understand how their religion can co-exist with other beliefs and identities. This can create a more open and inclusive generation.
3. Interfaith Education: Encouraging interfaith education can promote dialogue and understanding between adherents of different religions. It creates space to break stereotypes and build better relationships.

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