



THE ROLE AND SYNERGY OF PTKIN AND FKUB IN STRENGTHENING INTERRELIGIOUS HARMONY IN ACEH

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Abstract

This study analyzes the roles and patterns of synergy between State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) and the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB) in strengthening interfaith harmony in Aceh. The research employs a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews, participant observation, and institutional document analysis across selected PTKIN and FKUB institutions in Aceh. Data were analyzed through reduction, thematic categorization, and relational pattern interpretation. The findings indicate that PTKIN functions as a center for strengthening religious moderation through curriculum integration, research, and community engagement, while FKUB performs mediative and policy-facilitative roles in managing religious dynamics. Their synergy operates through dialogue forums, moderation training, and community-based collaborative programs. The study concludes that substantive religious harmony is more effectively achieved when PTKIN's educational function is structurally connected with FKUB's mediative role and supported by community participation. The research recommends strengthening institutional moderation frameworks within PTKIN and enhancing evidence-based conflict analysis capacity in FKUB.

Keywords: *PTKIN, FKUB, Institutional Synergy*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis peran dan pola sinergi antara Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri (PTKIN) dan Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB) dalam penguatan kerukunan umat beragama di Aceh. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen kelembagaan pada sejumlah PTKIN dan FKUB di Aceh. Analisis data dilakukan melalui reduksi, kategorisasi tematik, dan penarikan kesimpulan berbasis pola relasi antar-aktor. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa PTKIN berperan sebagai pusat penguatan moderasi beragama melalui integrasi kurikulum, riset, dan pengabdian masyarakat, sementara FKUB menjalankan fungsi mediasi sosial dan fasilitasi kebijakan dalam pengelolaan dinamika keagamaan. Sinergi keduanya berlangsung melalui forum dialog, pelatihan moderasi, serta kolaborasi program berbasis komunitas. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa penguatan kerukunan yang bersifat substantif lebih efektif ketika fungsi edukatif PTKIN terhubung secara struktural dengan fungsi mediatif FKUB serta didukung partisipasi masyarakat. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan penguatan kelembagaan moderasi beragama di PTKIN dan peningkatan kapasitas analisis konflik berbasis data pada FKUB.

Kata Kunci: *PTKIN, FKUB, Sinergi Kerukunan*



A. Introduction

Religious harmony in Indonesia has remained a persistent concern within academic discourse and public policy over the past decades (Aulia, 2023). Numerous conflicts with religious dimensions both interfaith and intra-faith indicate that Indonesia's religious pluralism continues to carry latent potential for social friction. Such conflicts frequently revolve around the establishment of houses of worship, religious practices, and divergent theological interpretations. In certain contexts, religious tensions intersect with ethnic identities, local political dynamics, and unequal resource distribution, giving rise to what is commonly conceptualized as ethno religious violence (Santoso et al., 2022).

Previous studies have made significant contributions to understanding the dynamics of conflict and post-conflict integration. Retnowati's research on post-riot integration in Situbondo demonstrates that local wisdom and the role of religious elites function as crucial social capital in restoring Muslim Christian relations (Retnowati, 2014). Similarly, Chris Wilson (2008), in his study of the North Maluku conflict, conceptualizes the violence as ethno-religious in nature, explicable through various social conflict theories (Buamona, 2020). In addition, surveys conducted by Setara Institute (2018) and analyses by the Ma'arif Institute (2016) have measured tolerance indices and interreligious conditions across Indonesian cities using quantitative, indicator-based approaches (Setara Institute, 2023).

Despite their scholarly importance, these studies leave several critical research gaps. First, most existing research concentrates on conflict dynamics or post-conflict reconciliation, rather than on preventive, systemic, and sustainable models of strengthening religious harmony. Second, tolerance index studies tend to adopt macro-level quantitative perspectives, offering limited insight into the micro-level mechanisms of collaboration among local actors in building social resilience. Third, there remains a notable lack of research specifically examining the synergistic relationship between Islamic higher education institutions, formal mediation bodies, and local communities as a collaborative model for strengthening interreligious harmony particularly in regions with distinctive Islamic governance characteristics such as Aceh.

In the Acehnese context, the issue of religious harmony entails unique complexities. Aceh is characterized by the formal implementation of Islamic law, yet demographically it remains home to ethnically and religiously diverse communities (Syuib & Hasnawati, 2022). Cases of intolerance, disputes over houses of worship, and internal tensions among Islamic groups indicate that conflict potential persists if not managed through inclusive social mechanisms. Institutionally, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has established the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) as a platform for interfaith dialogue and mediation. Concurrently, State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) hold an academic mandate to promote religious moderation, produce knowledge, and engage communities through the tridharma of higher education (Mawardi, 2022b).



However, to date, no empirically validated operational model exists that explains how the synergy between PTKIN, FKUB, and local communities concretely functions in strengthening religious harmony in Aceh. Relations among these actors are often normatively assumed to be harmonious, yet they have not been systematically analyzed in terms of collaborative structures, role distribution, coordination mechanisms, and their tangible impacts on substantive grassroots harmony. This analytical void constitutes the core focus of the present study.

Building on this gap, the present research goes beyond descriptive accounts of institutional roles by empirically examining interaction patterns, collaborative forms, and the effectiveness of synergy among PTKIN, FKUB, and communities in generating substantive and sustainable religious harmony. Using an exploratory qualitative approach, this study maps: (1) the institutional and epistemic resource potential of PTKIN in supporting harmony-building initiatives; (2) the forms and mechanisms of collaboration between PTKIN, FKUB, and community actors; and (3) the implications of this synergy for social resilience based on religious moderation in Aceh.

The scientific contribution of this study lies in the formulation of an empirically grounded synergistic model that is potentially replicable in regions with strong religious characteristics. Accordingly, this research not only enriches scholarship on conflict and tolerance but also offers an applied and contextual operational framework for managing religious harmony in plural societies.

B. Method

This study adopts an exploratory qualitative approach (Sugiyono, 2020) with a multi-site case study design to examine in depth the patterns of synergy among State Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN), the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB), and local communities in strengthening interreligious harmony in Aceh. The multi-site strategy was selected to move beyond single-site descriptive analysis and to generate analytical patterns through systematic cross-context institutional comparison. The research sites include three PTKINs: UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, IAIN Cot Kala Langsa, and STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh. These institutions were purposively selected to represent variations in institutional typology, regional coverage, and socio-religious dynamics across Aceh.

The units of analysis were explicitly defined at two interconnected levels: the institutional level and the relational level. At the institutional level, the study analyzes policies on religious moderation, community engagement programs, and the organizational structures and operational mechanisms of FKUB at both provincial and district levels. At the relational level, the focus is placed on coordination patterns, role distribution, formal and informal collaboration mechanisms, and the effectiveness of inter-actor interactions in preventing or mitigating potential religious conflicts. This dual-level analytical framework was designed to ensure that the findings move beyond



normative-descriptive accounts and instead produce substantive insights into the mechanisms of synergy and their impacts on social harmony.

Informants were selected through purposive sampling, based on the criteria of having strategic roles and direct involvement in moderation or interreligious harmony programs for at least the past two years. Informants included PTKIN leaders and managers of the Houses of Religious Moderation, lecturers responsible for religious moderation courses, FKUB officials at provincial and district levels, interfaith religious leaders, representatives of civil society organizations, and students actively involved in community service programs (KKN) or public education initiatives. The number of informants was determined using the principle of data saturation, whereby data collection was concluded when recurring patterns emerged and no significant new analytical categories were identified.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured in-depth interviews, limited participatory observation, and document analysis (Manotar, 2023). Interviews explored institutional resources, forms of collaboration, barriers to synergy, and the social impacts of programs on intergroup relations. Observations were carried out during interfaith dialogue activities, FKUB forums, and programs of the Houses of Religious Moderation to capture interactional dynamics directly. Document analysis included regulations, decrees, activity reports, meeting minutes, and relevant policy documents. The integration of these three techniques enabled methodological triangulation, enhancing data consistency and analytical depth.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles, M.B., Huberman, a. m., & Saldana, 2015). During data condensation, the data were coded through open coding to identify initial themes, followed by axial coding to connect categories and construct relational patterns among actors. Data were then organized into cross-site comparative matrices and institutional relationship maps to facilitate the identification of synergy typologies. Conclusions were drawn iteratively through cross-source and cross-site consistency checks and were further validated through member checking with key informants.

Data trustworthiness was ensured through source and method triangulation, maintenance of a transparent audit trail of the analytical process, and cross-case analysis to secure traceability and verifiability of findings. Through these procedures, the study is directed toward producing analytically grounded outputs, including a typology of institutional synergy patterns, identification of enabling and constraining factors of collaboration, and the formulation of an empirically based operational model of PTKIN FKUB community synergy. This methodological structure ensures a logical coherence between research objectives, analytical processes, findings, and conclusions, thereby securing the scientific accountability and academic contribution of the study.



C. Results and Discussion

The research findings indicate that collaboration among PTKIN, FKUB, and local communities forms a synergistic and complementary model of interreligious harmony. PTKIN plays a fundamental role in internalizing the values of religious moderation through curriculum development, research activities, and community service programs. FKUB performs a strategic function in managing socio-religious dynamics and preventing potential conflicts, while the community serves as the primary arena for the practical implementation of harmony-oriented values. This model emphasizes a balanced integration of educational, mediative, and participatory dimensions in strengthening social cohesion.

In the Aceh context, PTKIN institutions such as UIN Ar-Raniry have established the Rumah Moderasi Beragama (House of Religious Moderation) as a central platform for strengthening moderation values. RMB programs include the training of religious leaders, interfaith harmony research initiatives, and cross-faith field-based learning activities (Rambe et al., 2023). FKUB Aceh functions as a communication bridge among religious communities, mediates religion-based conflicts, and provides policy recommendations to local governments. Meanwhile, community participation is manifested through cross-community social activities such as mutual cooperation programs, joint celebrations of religious holidays, and interfaith humanitarian assistance.

These findings are consistent with the studies of Rambe (2023) and Maizuddin (2023), which emphasize that the success of religious moderation in PTKIN environments is determined by cross-actor engagement. The synergy developed in Aceh reflects the application of Robert Putnam's (2000) social capital theory, which highlights the importance of trust and social networks in strengthening societal cohesion. The institutional presence of FKUB and PTKIN thus functions as dual pillars reinforcing socio-religious relations, particularly when supported by active and sustained community participation.

1. The Potential and Role of PTKIN in Strengthening Social and Religious Harmony

Substantively, indicators of engagement, participation, or "roles" can be understood through the lens of available potential and resources. This perspective is equally applicable to the potential and resources for interreligious harmony possessed by institutions of higher education. Such potential and resources constitute a constructive and strategic infrastructure serving as fundamental capital for achieving institutional objectives and realizing shared aspirations and ideals. Issues of religious harmony and moderation are not unfamiliar within academic discourse in Aceh. Discussions surrounding harmony and religious moderation have increasingly gained prominence among academics, extending beyond governmental policy circles into broader scholarly engagement (Rosyid, 2022).

In the academic context, the role of PTKIN (State Islamic Higher Education Institutions) is both significant and indispensable, particularly in Aceh Province, where



the majority of the population is Muslim. Aceh is home to several PTKIN institutions, including UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, IAIN Cot Kala Langsa, and STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh. These three institutions are strategically positioned and normatively committed to fostering interreligious harmony in Aceh, while simultaneously fulfilling the mission of the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi as their core institutional mandate. The following section outlines the specific potentials of each PTKIN in Aceh in contributing to the construction of a harmonious and moderate religious social order:

1) Potential of UIN Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh

As the largest State Islamic Religious University (PTKIN) in Aceh Province, UIN Ar-Raniry plays a strategic role in fostering interreligious harmony through the national *religious moderation* program initiated by the central government (Juwaini et al., 2025). Consequently, religious moderation has become an official institutional agenda that must be systematically integrated into higher education at UIN Ar-Raniry encompassing curriculum design, planned academic and extracurricular programs, institutional development strategies, and the strengthening of human resource capacity across the academic community. In this context, UIN Ar-Raniry possesses substantial institutional resources that can support the realization of interreligious harmony:

a. Learning Curriculum

Several study programs at UIN Ar-Raniry have already incorporated curricular content oriented toward interreligious harmony, particularly the programs of Religious Studies, Sociology of Religion, Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy, Islamic Da'wah Management, Islamic Education, and Social Welfare. In addition, compulsory university wide courses taken by all students contain values and principles of religious harmony, such as Islamic Sharia Studies, Basic Cultural Sciences, Islamic Theology (*Ilm al-Kalam*), and Islamic Studies (*Dirasah Islamiyah*) (Academic Handbook of UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, 2020). This condition is consistent with the view of a professor from the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Philosophy:

SR who stated that, in general, the UIN Ar-Raniry curriculum already includes elements of interreligious harmony through the foundational pillars taught in several PTKIN courses. However, he emphasized that there is no specific or standalone curriculum explicitly dedicated to interreligious harmony at UIN Ar-Raniry (Interview with SR, March 6, 2021).

Similarly, HS explained that UIN Ar-Raniry has long implemented education for harmony within its curriculum. For instance, the Comparative Schools of Thought program is fundamentally oriented toward fostering intra-religious harmony by introducing students to the diversity of Islamic legal schools (*mazhab*) within Muslim society. Through an understanding of the schools of thought that are widely practiced in Muslim communities, individuals can grow, develop, and practice religion in a moderate manner (Interview with HS, April 3, 2021).

Understanding the perspectives and behaviors of others, he argued, constitutes the very framework of moderation. In contrast, extremism arises when individuals absolutize



their own understanding and refuse to acknowledge the perspectives of others, leading to intolerance and exclusivist attitudes.

He further emphasized that the role of PTKIN institutions is already optimal; the remaining challenge lies in the limited internalization of knowledge among students and academic actors. Knowledge is vast, while human cognitive capacity is inherently limited, allowing individuals to grasp only fragments of a much broader intellectual reality. Therefore, partial understandings should not be contested against other partial understandings, nor should one's own interpretation be absolutized as the sole truth while delegitimizing others. In his view, this epistemic humility constitutes the key foundation for the success of religious moderation (Interview with HS, April 3, 2021).

b. Academic Staff (Lecturers)

The presence of human resources from UIN Ar-Raniry has long been recognized as a significant factor in fostering interreligious harmony in Aceh. Several UIN lecturers serve as administrators of the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB) at both provincial and district/city levels, some holding leadership positions while others serve as members. In addition, many of them act as resource persons in various events related to religious harmony, while others function as preachers, volunteers, and facilitators in community-based socialization and capacity-building programs promoting interreligious tolerance (Basid & Halimi, 2024). However, these activities are frequently carried out in a personal capacity rather than as part of formal institutional assignments from the State Islamic Higher Education Institution (PTKIN):

According to HS, a substantial number of UIN academics have actively contributed to the promotion of interreligious harmony. When extended to the broader domains of religious moderation and tolerance, many UIN lecturers are already involved at both regional and national levels. He further emphasized that contemporary lecturers are expected to engage deeply with issues of tolerance and religious moderation. Within the context of PTKIN, it is considered incompatible for a lecturer to cultivate or disseminate extremist interpretations while operating within the academic environment of an Islamic higher education institution (Interview with HS, April 3, 2021).

In addition, a Workshop on Religious Moderation for UIN Ar-Raniry lecturers was conducted under the theme "Religious Moderation: Strategies for the Penetration of Religious Values in Islamic Higher Education." The workshop was held over four days (22–25 June 2021) and was attended by 160 lecturers from various academic disciplines. The speakers included Dr. Ahmad Suaedy, Dean of the Faculty of Nusantara Islam at Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama, Jakarta, and Dr. Junaidi Simun, Research and Advocacy Manager at the Institute for Peace Pathways (ITP), Jakarta. Dr. Ahmad Suaedy emphasized that Islamic higher education institutions play a strategic role in educating society at large regarding religious moderation. In the Indonesian and Nusantara traditions, religion and belief systems occupy a central position in social life; consequently, any transformative effort that excludes religion is unlikely to succeed.



However, incorporating religion does not necessarily imply the rigid application of conventional or established religious doctrines in public or governmental domains. Rather, it may involve critical review and reinterpretation to ensure that religious values and institutions remain aligned with societal development and contribute constructively to addressing contemporary social challenges.

Therefore, Islamic higher education institutions are expected to play a central role in developing and operationalizing religious moderation programs in a more comprehensive manner. Religious moderation should not be confined to countering religious radicalism alone, but should also address broader humanitarian issues. Accordingly, religious moderation should not be treated merely as a moral education course, nor as a concept limited to state institutions, but rather as a mode of thinking, attitude formation, and behavioral orientation for citizens in social, national, and civic life. Within the context of higher education particularly Islamic higher education religious moderation should not function as indoctrination, but as a subject of critical academic engagement, open debate, and methodological discourse, grounded in national values and responsive to contemporary societal challenges.

2) Potential of STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh

Similarly, STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh, although operating with a relatively different institutional capacity compared to UIN Ar-Raniry, possesses a number of potentials and resources that can support the development of religious harmony. More constructively, several key sources of religious harmony within STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh can be described as follows.

a. Learning Curriculum

Inayatillah, the Chairperson of STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh, emphasized that religious moderation must be systematically developed within educational institutions, particularly through the strengthening of curricula such as Islamic Religious Education, Civic Education, and related subjects. This effort must also be supported by the capacity of academic staff to internalize and transmit paradigms of moderation to students. Furthermore, from a governmental perspective, beyond regulatory frameworks, the values of religious moderation should be actualized through the conduct of state officials in their roles as citizens, believers, and public leaders, thereby providing exemplary models for the younger generation (Interview with IT, 6 April 2021).

According to Jannatin Nisa, a student activist at STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh, the topic of interreligious harmony was introduced in the Aqidah Akhlak course, although only briefly and not as a focused theme, since the subject primarily addresses moral conduct and ethical character formation in Islam (Interview with JN, 7 April 2021).

Similarly, Maysarah, another student activist, stated that through courses such as Islamic Civilization History and Philosophy, students are taught values of compassion and the aesthetic of Islam as a religion free from destruction and violence. She further noted that these values have begun to find practical

implementation within the governance of West Aceh Regency. STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh, in her view, plays a significant role when its students are able to convey the understanding that religious differences are not sources of conflict, as reflected in the Qur'anic principle “lakum dīnukum wa liya dīn” (“for you your religion, and for me mine”). When lecturers integrate teachings related to harmony and coexistence, this constitutes the institutional contribution of STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh in cultivating mutual love, respect, and compassion among communities, even in the absence of a specific course dedicated exclusively to interreligious harmony (Interview with M, 7 April 2021).

Maya Sartika, Chairperson of the Student Executive Council (DEMA), similarly explained that values of harmony are taught by lecturers within the context of religious courses; however, to her knowledge, there is no formal syllabus specifically designed to focus on the topic of religious harmony (Interview with MS, 7 April 2021).

Nevertheless, implicitly, STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh's curriculum contains substantial components that intersect with the values of harmony, tolerance, and religious moderation. Courses that embody these dimensions include: (1) Pancasila and Citizenship Education; (2) Foundations of Aqidah Akhlak; (3) Islamic Law in Aceh; (4) Law and Human Rights; (5) Civic Education; (6) Intercultural and Interreligious Communication; (7) Ethics and Human Rights in Social Work; (8) Conflict Resolution; and (9) Multiculturalism Studies (Academic Guidelines of STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh, 2018).

b. Student Organizations

At STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh, to the best of my knowledge, there has been no formal orientation on religious harmony for students. Some students even express resistance toward the concept of religious moderation, perceiving it as an attempt to mix or dilute the teachings of their own faith with those of others.

However, the principle of moderation aims to promote tolerance, mutual respect, and the maintenance of social cohesion among different religious communities. One illustrative example concerns differing customs during condolence visits. A student from Simeulue noted that in her region, visitors bring food to the mourning household, whereas in Meulaboh, the hosts themselves provide the food to guests (Interview with MS, April 7, 2021). Specifically targeting students, the Seuramoe for Religious Moderation at STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh has drafted a program to develop a publication on religious moderation; nevertheless, its implementation has not yet been fully realized (Interview with M.I., Chair of Seuramoe for Religious Moderation, April 7, 2021).

c. Seuramoe for Religious Moderation

The establishment of the Seuramoe for Religious Moderation at STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh was marked by Webinar Session 9, titled “Religious Moderation and Challenges in the Era of Disruption.” The webinar featured three prominent speakers: the Rector of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Amany Lubis; anthropologist and UIN



Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh faculty member, Reza Idria; and the Rector of STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh, Inayatillah. M. Ikhwan, Chair of the Seuramoe for Religious Moderation, emphasized that the establishment of this unit aligns with government directives outlined in the strategic plan of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. He noted that the Seuramoe will primarily focus on research related to religious moderation through a lens of local wisdom. In addition to research and guidance, the unit is expected to produce studies that may serve as references for resolving societal issues as they arise. “Thus, it can be used as a reference for addressing problems emerging in the community,” stated M. Ikhwan during the webinar (Ikhwan, 2020).

3) Potentials and Resources at IAIN Zawiyah Cot Kala Langsa

IAIN Zawiyah Cot Kala Langsa possesses considerable potential and institutional resources that may be further developed to promote and sustain interreligious harmony. Among these resources, the academic curriculum represents a significant strategic asset:

a. Curriculum

The university offers several courses that are directly or indirectly related to the values of religious moderation, tolerance, and social cohesion. These courses include: (1) Pancasila; (2) Da‘wah Studies; (3) Methods of Islamic Studies; (4) Civic Education; (5) Akhlaq and Tasawuf (Islamic Ethics and Sufism); (6) Hadith of Da‘wah; (7) Qur’anic Exegesis of Da‘wah Verses; (8) Islamic Communication; and (9) Islamic Sharia Counseling. Although the institution does not yet provide a specific course explicitly dedicated to interreligious harmony, the substance and orientation of these subjects inherently engage with themes of coexistence, ethical engagement, civic responsibility, and peaceful religious expression. Consequently, the existing curriculum implicitly contributes to fostering attitudes and competencies that support religious harmony within both academic and broader societal contexts.

b. Internal Programs and Activities

One of the routine annual programs conducted by IAIN Zawiyah Cot Kala Langsa is the (PBAK), or Introduction to Academic and Student Culture, organized as part of the new student orientation. The event held on 31 August 2021 commenced with a keynote address by Yaqut Cholil Qoumas, Minister of Religious Affairs, emphasizing the importance of religious moderation. During this occasion, new students of the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Langsa were encouraged to become agents of religious moderation within society. The program serves as an initial stimulus for students to pursue their academic development within a framework oriented toward interreligious harmony. As prospective agents of social change, students are systematically prepared and equipped with values promoting tolerance and moderation in religious life.

According to a lecturer at IAIN Langsa, institutional efforts to foster integrity among civil servants (ASN) are implemented through several strategic initiatives. These include strengthening professional duties and functions, developing contextual and dynamic curricula, establishing a Rumah Moderasi Beragama



(House of Religious Moderation), organizing training programs on religious moderation, conducting dynamic religious studies forums, fostering social interaction and collegial engagement, formulating research and publication policies that reflect moderation values, and implementing community service programs that prioritize peaceful and communicative approaches (Interview with Lecturer of IAIN Langsa, NA, 17 April 2021).

From the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) in Aceh possess substantial institutional capital that can reinforce social harmony. Such capital includes inclusive religious curricula, specialized units dedicated to moderation (e.g., the House of Religious Moderation), qualified human resources particularly lecturers actively engaged in scholarly writing and advocacy on moderation and community engagement programs that reach diverse social groups. Field studies indicate that the establishment of Houses of Religious Moderation in several PTKIN institutions has constituted an important starting point for internalizing moderation narratives among academic communities and surrounding societies. However, program sustainability frequently depends on individual initiatives and inconsistent budgetary support.

In the educational domain, the integration of religious moderation content into compulsory courses and student activities such as interfaith seminars and substantive dialogue forums has demonstrably enhanced students' understanding of pluralism. Community Service Programs (KKN), which involve students from diverse academic disciplines and, in certain contexts, different religious backgrounds, facilitate intergroup contact that might otherwise be limited. These findings align with social capital theory, which posits that repeated interaction, mutual trust, and shared norms contribute to strengthening social cohesion (Basid & Halimi, 2023).

2. The Role of FKUB as Mediator and Policy Facilitator

The Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) at the provincial and district levels in Aceh performs a formal function as a coordinating body, conflict mediator, and policy advisory forum in matters concerning the governance of interreligious harmony. Through deliberative meetings, leadership elections, and advocacy programs, FKUB has demonstrated active engagement at the grassroots level. Nevertheless, its technical capacity particularly in conducting root-cause analyses of conflict and systematic risk mapping requires further strengthening to ensure that interventions are evidence-based and strategically targeted (Darniati, 2017).

The concept of religious moderation currently promoted by the government is not intended exclusively for Muslims, but for adherents of all recognized religions in Indonesia. In this regard, the state plays a crucial role as a guarantor of legal protection and social order, ensuring the realization of interreligious harmony among citizens of diverse faiths. According to Khairul Azhar, Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of West Aceh Regency, the government bears the responsibility to safeguard and guarantee citizens' rights to freely practice



their religion. He emphasized that “the government must protect and ensure the security of society to worship freely,” noting that interreligious tolerance in West Aceh remains relatively high, characterized by mutual respect for existing differences (Interview with KA, May 4, 2021).

Institutional synergy is further reflected in coordination meetings involving FKUB and local government authorities. On July 14, 2021, Mawardi, Assistant for Governance and Privileged Affairs of the Regional Secretariat of West Aceh, opened a coordination meeting of FKUB aimed at strengthening religious harmony in the regency. The meeting, initiated by the National Unity and Political Affairs Agency (Kesbangpol) of West Aceh, was attended by representatives of the Regional Leadership Coordination Forum (Forkopimda), the Ministry of Religious Affairs, interfaith leaders, traditional leaders, and FKUB members. Mawardi underlined that maintaining interreligious harmony constitutes a shared responsibility inherent to religious communities, while the government is obliged to provide services, regulation, and empowerment mechanisms, facilitated through FKUB.

Structurally, FKUB is organized hierarchically from the national level coordinated by the central government in Jakarta to the provincial and district/municipal levels. In Aceh Province, FKUB was established by the Provincial Government and is headquartered in Banda Aceh. At the district level, including West Aceh, FKUB is formed by the respective local government. Importantly, FKUB’s membership structure reflects religious plurality; although Muslims constitute the majority population, representatives from Protestant Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism are integral members of the forum (Mawardi, 2022a).

In West Aceh, FKUB collaborates not only with governmental institutions but also with higher education institutions and other stakeholders, including the State Islamic Higher Education Institution (PTKIN), namely STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh. This partnership is embedded in the institution’s vision and mission, although its implementation has not yet reached optimal effectiveness due to various structural and operational constraints. FKUB carries a national mission aligned with the principles of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, both of which emphasize harmony and peaceful coexistence. Moreover, FKUB embodies the Islamic mission of *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* (mercy to all creation), aiming to promote universal welfare and social benefit (Interview with the Chairperson of FKUB West Aceh, NA, April 17, 2021).

Operationally, FKUB West Aceh conducts intra- and interreligious dialogues on a quarterly and semi-annual basis, as well as on special occasions when necessary. These dialogues involve diverse stakeholders, including academics from STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh, such as Abi Samsuar (former Chairperson) and M. Ikhwan (Head of the Religious Moderation Center). Such activities illustrate FKUB’s function as a primary instrument for sustaining interreligious harmony at the local level.

In this framework, PTKIN serves as a strategic intellectual partner, producing scholarly ideas, theoretical frameworks, and conceptual models that normatively support



FKUB's mandate. Ideally, PTKIN should assume a more proactive role by collaborating closely with FKUB and other institutions, leveraging its academic resources and research capacity to strengthen interreligious harmony initiatives.

Collaboration between FKUB and PTKIN generally takes the form of joint seminars, mediation training programs, and the development of short curricula for religious leaders. This cooperative model enables FKUB to utilize PTKIN's research outputs as policy references or training modules, while PTKIN gains valuable access to field-based data and practical experience for research and community engagement activities.

3. The Role of Society: Socio-Cultural Foundations and the Legitimacy of Practice

Acehnese society is widely recognized for its strong religious commitment, particularly among its Muslim majority. Religious values permeate nearly all aspects of social life, including economic, political, educational, and socio-cultural domains. A well-known traditional maxim encapsulates this inseparable relationship between religion and culture: "Hukum ngon Adat lage Zat ngon Sifeut" law (Islamic law) and custom are like substance and attribute, inherently intertwined and inseparable (Idami et al., 2022).

With the formal implementation of Islamic Sharia in Aceh Province, religious life has become a central issue attracting attention from government authorities, grassroots communities, and religious leaders both Muslim and non-Muslim. A major challenge in enforcing Sharia is the extent to which it can effectively foster a religious climate that is productive, contributive, and conducive to peaceful coexistence within Acehnese society. In this context, interreligious harmony in Aceh has become a significant topic of public discourse, academic study, and media coverage at local, national, and international levels. The issue also aligns with the Indonesian government's national initiative on "Religious Moderation," which aims to strengthen harmony among diverse religious communities across the country (Nurlaila, 2022).

However, religious harmony in Aceh often appears more formal than substantive. Diverse perspectives on this issue emerge from community members, academics, and students:

A student from STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh, Jannatin Nisa, defines religious harmony as a condition in which adherents of different religions Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Protestantism, and Catholicism live peacefully, cooperate, respect one another, and refrain from discrimination, insult, or hostility. According to her, while each religious community retains the right to practice its faith freely, others are obliged to respect those practices without desecration or condemnation. She further acknowledges that internal conflicts within Islam do occur, often stemming from differing interpretations and limited individual awareness. Nevertheless, these differences rarely escalate into serious disputes (Interview with Student, April 11, 2021).

Regarding the situation in West Aceh, a lecturer from STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh who actively engages in interreligious harmony initiatives notes that



the dominant religious orientation in the region characterized by traditionalist (mainstream Salafi) tendencies often exhibits exclusivist attitudes. He further explains that internal Islamic tensions, such as disputes involving Wahhabi, Shi'a, and groups labeled as deviant, are more frequently observed in the West–South Aceh region. Despite these tensions, no violent bloodshed has occurred as a result of such conflicts (Interview with Lecturer, April 11, 2021).

A local resident, Maysarah, similarly emphasizes that religious harmony in West Aceh is evident in daily life. Minority religious groups are able to conduct their worship peacefully and without interference. Interreligious clashes, vandalism, or acts of harassment are virtually unheard of in the region. In her view, West Aceh exemplifies a district that values and preserves interreligious harmony (Interview with Resident, April 12, 2021).

Overall, these accounts suggest that religious harmony in Aceh is more visibly realized in interreligious relations between the Muslim majority and non-Muslim minorities than within intra-religious dynamics among Muslims themselves.

A Buddhist religious leader residing in Banda Aceh affirms that the Buddhist community has been able to perform religious rituals and activities without pressure or disturbance. He notes that interfaith dialogue has been facilitated, including invitations to share experiences at UIN Ar-Raniry (Interview with Buddhist Leader, April 21, 2021).

Similarly, a Christian religious leader in Banda Aceh asserts that interreligious harmony functions well in Aceh. He expresses surprise at reports indicating that Aceh's religious harmony index remains relatively low (Interview with Christian Leader, April 21, 2021).

In contrast, intra-religious harmony among Muslims appears less consolidated. Ongoing polemics and discursive conflicts particularly between traditionalist and non-traditionalist Muslim groups continue to shape public religious life. The dominance of majority groups over minority factions often weakens the structural foundation of harmony, especially when exclusivist and politically motivated interests are involved. Given that Aceh's population is overwhelmingly Muslim, tensions related to religious moderation tend to manifest internally rather than between different faith communities. These internal disputes are frequently rooted in divergent educational backgrounds and socio-cultural orientations. Although such tensions generate recurring debates in public discourse and media platforms, they are unlikely to be entirely resolved; instead, they can only be mitigated to prevent escalation and broader social consequences.

Local communities in Aceh play a critical role in sustaining harmony. Indigenous values such as customary norms (*adat*), mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), and traditions of social solidarity (*silaturahmi*) constitute essential social capital (Tasrim et al., 2023). When integrated with culturally sensitive narratives of religious moderation, these values strengthen grassroots coexistence. Field observations indicate that shared cultural events, collective disaster responses, and interfaith humanitarian initiatives are more effective in building durable social cohesion than formal socialization programs



alone. The legitimacy conferred by traditional leaders and religious authorities, including dayah leaders, is therefore crucial in determining the success of community-based programs at the grassroots level.

4. The Role of Society: Socio-Cultural Foundations and the Legitimacy of Practice

Based on the findings and discussion presented above, a Synergistic Model of PTKIN FKUB Society is proposed to foster religious harmony in Aceh. This model represents a conceptual framework that integrates Islamic higher education institutions (PTKIN), the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB), and the broader community in building and sustaining interreligious harmony within a region characterized by strong historical identity and religious commitment. The model emerges from the need for an integrative, comprehensive, and sustainable approach to addressing socio-religious dynamics in Aceh. It emphasizes cross-sector collaboration to ensure that values of tolerance and religious moderation move beyond normative discourse and are substantively implemented in everyday social life.

Theoretically, this model is grounded in three principal frameworks: Organizational Role Theory, Social Capital Theory, and Conflict Transformation Theory. Organizational Role Theory posits that social institutions bear functional responsibilities aligned with societal expectations regarding their roles and contributions. Within this framework, PTKIN, as Islamic higher education institutions, are expected to serve as centers for cultivating and disseminating the values of religious moderation. Social Capital Theory underscores the importance of social networks, trust, and civic participation as foundational elements for social harmony. Meanwhile, Conflict Transformation Theory conceptualizes harmony not merely as the absence of conflict, but as the outcome of transformed social relationships and structures that are more just, equitable, and inclusive.

In practice, PTKIN function as centers of excellence and intellectual driving forces in strengthening religious moderation. This role is realized through the implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education: education, research, and community engagement. Through curricula and learning processes grounded in moderation principles, PTKIN foster tolerant attitudes among students and academic communities. Research activities generate empirical findings and policy recommendations relevant to local and national dynamics of religious harmony. Community service initiatives provide avenues for translating dialogical and inclusive values into concrete actions within multicultural settings.

The role of PTKIN extends beyond academic domains into social and cultural spheres. Through training programs, seminars, public lectures, and student-led initiatives centered on religious moderation, campuses become social learning spaces that cultivate interreligious tolerance. Programs such as Religious Moderation-oriented Community Service (KKN), interfaith dialogues, and cross-ethnic and cross-religious community



mentoring illustrate the practical actualization of harmony-based values within Islamic higher education. In this regard, PTKIN act as agents of value transformation, bridging academic reflection and social praxis.

Concurrently, the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB) serves as a socio-religious mediator, facilitating relationships among educational institutions, government authorities, and society. FKUB possesses formal legitimacy to perform strategic functions, including mediating religious disputes, facilitating interfaith dialogue, and providing policy recommendations to local governments. Within this synergistic model, FKUB ensures that initiatives undertaken by PTKIN and community actors align with national regulations while remaining attentive to Aceh's local wisdom, which is shaped by Islamic law and Indonesia's pluralistic ethos (Nur Ulayya et al., 2025).

The relationship between PTKIN and FKUB is collaborative and complementary. PTKIN provide epistemological foundations and academic analysis, whereas FKUB offers practical engagement with social realities (KASRON NASUTION, 2023). Their synergy generates integrative programs such as campus-based conflict mediation training, joint academic forums, and the establishment of youth interfaith platforms (FKUB Muda) that encourage cross-religious student participation. This collaboration facilitates the flow of knowledge from academia to society while simultaneously enabling academic institutions to reflect critically on complex religious realities.

Society and local government occupy strategic positions as socio-cultural foundations and structural supporters within this model. Through the Ministry of Religious Affairs and regional administrations, the government provides policy support, budget allocation, and regulatory frameworks that sustain interreligious harmony programs. At the same time, society functions both as the principal actor and the direct beneficiary of tolerance values cultivated by PTKIN and FKUB. Interfaith social activities, humanitarian collaboration, and collective action in disaster response exemplify the grassroots internalization of harmony-based values.

Together, these three actors form a mutually reinforcing social ecosystem. PTKIN contribute intellectual and spiritual awareness; FKUB manages mediation processes and interreligious communication; and government and society drive the practical implementation of harmony-oriented values. This synergy produces a social system that is adaptive and resilient to potential horizontal religious conflicts. Given its integrative character, the model holds potential for replication not only in Aceh but also in other Indonesian regions characterized by high social heterogeneity.

In conclusion, the PTKIN FKUB Society Synergistic Model offers an alternative paradigm for strengthening substantive, collaborative, and sustainable religious harmony. It is substantive because it is rooted in shared awareness and understanding; collaborative because it actively engages multiple social actors; and sustainable because it is embedded within education, policy, and culture. The implementation of this model is expected to reinforce the foundations of social peace in Aceh and to serve as a replicable national



framework for promoting interreligious harmony in Indonesia's multicultural and pluralistic society.

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the strengthening of interreligious harmony in Aceh is most effectively achieved through a tripartite synergistic model involving PTKIN (Islamic higher education institutions) as centers of education and research, FKUB as agents of mediation and policy advocacy, and the community as the locus of social practice and cultural legitimacy. The implementation and replication of this model have strong potential to foster substantive religious harmony not only in Aceh, but also in other regions characterized by similar socio-religious complexity.

Within this framework, PTKIN functions as a hub of religious moderation and a source of knowledge-based transformation, FKUB operates as a mediator of policy and conflict resolution, and the community serves as the arena for practical implementation of harmonious values. The effectiveness of this synergistic model is contingent upon the sustainability of funding, the active engagement of local leaders, and the systematic utilization of research-based evidence in policymaking processes.

This integrated collaboration produces a replicable pattern of governance for interreligious harmony across diverse Indonesian contexts. Accordingly, the study recommends the formulation of policies to strengthen the institutional capacity of Rumah Moderasi Beragama, the enhancement of FKUB competencies in evidence-based conflict analysis, and the continuous involvement of communities in sustainable interfaith social activities.

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