

# **INTERFAITH SOCIAL SOLIDARITY: A SOCIO-THEOLOGICAL ALTERNATIVE TO POST- PANDEMIC COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT**

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## **Abstract**

*The welfare of citizens, particularly in Sukoreno Village, Jember, East Java, has been adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia over the past 2 (two) years. Efforts based on socio-theological principles and interfaith civil society have emerged as alternative solutions to address this issue. The purpose of this article is to elucidate the manifestations of interfaith social solidarity in Sukoreno Village, Jember, East Java, as a means of overcoming the economic challenges faced by the community in the post-Covid-19 pandemic. This study employed a qualitative method. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and document review. The findings indicated that this form of interfaith solidarity was fostered through the utilization of social capital within the community. Examples of such solidarity include social services, heightened Covid-19 awareness, and the optimization of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and local village resources. While these efforts may not directly lead to significant improvements in the economic welfare of the community, they do highlight that community empowerment can be achieved through an interfaith approach.*

**Keywords:** *Interfaith solidarity; Tolerance; Post-pandemic*

## **Abstrak**

*Pandemi Covid-19 di Indonesia selama 2 (dua) tahun terakhir telah menurunkan tingkat kesejahteraan warga, khususnya di Desa Sukoreno, Jember, Jawa Timur. Upaya berbasis sosio-teologi masyarakat sipil lintas agama menjadi salah satu alternatif dalam mengatasi problem tersebut. Artikel ini bermaksud untuk menjelaskan bentuk-bentuk solidaritas sosial lintas agama di Desa Sukoreno, Jember, Jawa Timur dalam mengatasi problem ekonomi masyarakat pasca pandemi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan telaah dokumen. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa bentuk solidaritas lintas agama ini muncul melalui pemanfaatan modal sosial yang ada di masyarakat. Diantaranya dalam bentuk bakti sosial, sigap Covid-19, dan optimalisasi UMKM dan potensi lokal desa. Upaya ini meskipun tidak dapat menjustifikasi peningkatan kesejahteraan ekonomi warga, namun dapat merefleksikan bahwa pemberdayaan masyarakat dapat dilakukan dengan pendekatan lintas agama.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Solidaritas lintas agama; Toleransi; Pasca pandemi*

## A. INTRODUCTION

The diversity of Indonesia is an iconic representation of the national identity that serves as a local destination and is universally recognized. One of its diversities is reflected in the religious and belief systems that are firmly held by the people, supported by data Kemenag (2022), The religions embraced by the Indonesian people consist of Islam with a percentage of 86.85%, Christianity 7.56%, Catholicism 3.08%, Hinduism 1.69%, Buddhism 0.74%, Confucianism 0.03%, and those who believe in one God (followers of indigenous religions) amount to 0.04%. This religious diversity is commonly known as pluralism. From a socio-political perspective, pluralism leads to a system that recognizes the coexistence of diverse groups, be they based on race, ethnicity, or belief systems, that uphold the differences in characteristics among the groups (Saragih, 2018).

Regarding this understanding, essentially Indonesia is not a religious state or based on religion. However, Indonesia is a country that upholds and applies the principle of *de jure*, which is to respect religious communities (Fatih 2019). The state has guaranteed the freedom to worship based on each individual's religion and belief, as stated in Article 29 (2) of the 1945 Constitution. Therefore, the diversity of religions and beliefs held by the community has equal constitutional rights and obligations.

However, religious pluralism also contributes to the proliferation of the primordial perspective between religious communities. The primordial view rooted in society has the potential to undermine social cohesion and erode the right to Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) due to universal truth. As emphasized by Marsh (2018:187-213), The source of theological problems stems from the *doctrine of salvation*, which provides a paradigm of truth, salvation, and *enlightenment* that is directed

only to certain teachings. In addition, challenges to social cohesion can also arise from the coexistence of different religions in a community while maintaining certain characteristics. This problem creates religious exclusivism that gives rise to an inferior perspective toward minority groups.

Cases of conflict, violence, and religious social movements often become crucial issues in Indonesia as well as at the global level. As seen in the case of violence experienced by Muslims as a minority religion by the Sinhala-Buddhist group in the country of Sri Lanka (Mihlar 2019). The struggle and social construction carried out by minority religious communities against majority religions as an effort to fulfill human rights in Europe (Richardson and Shoemaker 2008). Conflicts in other developed countries also affect social life, especially in Indonesia as a multi-religious country. The conflicts that have occurred in Indonesia include conflicts between religious groups and followers of certain beliefs in Rembang related to the construction of places of worship for believers (Rachmadhani 2019). The case of Sunni-Shiite conflict in Sampang Madura, which demonstrates the strong dominance of the majority community in society leading to social discrimination (Zattullah 2021), and other cases of conflicts, as well as interfaith conflicts that occurred in the Puger area, Jember (Izzati 2018).

The emergence of various conflicts reflects that our society needs a space for social integrity, by emphasizing self-reflection on both immanent and transcendent aspects. Therefore, in the last decade, the government along with cross-religious communities has intensively encouraged the development of interfaith dialogue. The concept of interaction and dialogue between religious communities is not a new idea, but has been a hot topic since the New Order era. Starting from various religious issues in Indonesia and the demand to dialogue tolerance among religious groups, the government held an "inter-religious *musyawarah* (*inter-religious*

*dialogue*)" in 1967 which was attended by representatives of religious leaders (Mantu 2018). Through religious dialogue, it is hoped that a balance of understanding among different faiths can be achieved to represent religious tolerance. As Zarkasi (2018), Stating that dialogue can result in the strengthening of harmony and understanding. In line with the context of tolerance in Indonesia which always emphasizes mutual respect towards other religions and beliefs (Zalec and Pavlikova 2019).

The implementation of pluralistic interfaith awareness will undoubtedly shape relations and social interactions in society. Interfaith tolerance embodies a potential collaboration that can achieve social cohesion (Djuniasih and Kosasih 2019). Social cohesion can be generated through rational action and collective action based on the integrity of individuals or groups that play a role in the social structure of society. Social cohesion is closely related to social capital that reflects the collaboration within society. Mahmudin (2021), Social capital is a prerequisite for the creation of social cohesion, which is inseparable from relationships that bind (*bonding*), bridge broader relationships (*bridging*), and connect social networks (*linking*).

The representation of religious pluralism in Indonesia can be found in all *melting pot* areas (places where various races, ethnicities, languages, cultures, and religions merge), one of which is in Sukoreno, Jember. The religious heterogeneity in Sukoreno is not a crucial issue among the community. On the contrary, religious diversity is used as a benchmark for the community to cultivate a sense of tolerance and social solidarity based on socio-theological aspects. As stated in the statement Agung (2017), It affirms that religious diversity is a natural part of national life to reflect the values of Pancasila. Among the religions and beliefs firmly held by the people of Sukoreno are Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Catholicism, Sapta Darma, and Ilmu Sejati. The

religious plurality in Sukoreno is explicitly recognized by the local government as a miniature of the nation and awarded the title of 'Pancasila Village' (Erningtyas and Widiyanto 2021).

The typology of fundamentalist understanding of pluralism among religious communities can maintain the existence of tolerance and harmony within the social sphere (Hutapea and Iswanto 2020). The cooperation among religious communities is realized in all aspects of social, economic, political, and theological life in the society. Freedom of religion and belief in Sukoreno is highly respected as the implementation of Human Rights. Therefore, it is not a new phenomenon for the local community to have differences in beliefs within one family household (Family Card/KK). To maintain religious cohesion in the community, the government collaborates with religious leaders, village youth, and youth organizations to form religious communities in Sukoreno. The religious communities serve to build theological dialogue among communities, provide guidance, discipline, and social transformation in society (Hadebe 2017).

The social programs formed by interfaith communities in Sukoreno village, such as FKUB (Forum of Community of Religious Believers), Silamas (Interfaith Friendship), and Pemula (Interfaith Youth), aim to create harmony and mutual understanding among religious communities. Especially in the last decade, the pandemic has caused physical and psychological shocks through traumatic experiences faced by the local community. It is no secret that the pandemic has had significant impacts on various sectors of community life. The implementation of government regulations at both national and local levels in response to the pandemic is through the application of *social distancing and physical distancing* measures (Loneragan and Chalmers 2020). As a result, social restrictions due to the pandemic have an impact on the mental and

psychosocial conditions of the community (Setyaningrum and Yanuarita 2020).

The ongoing pandemic situation is also felt by the plural community in Sukoreno. Although it can be said that the pandemic is starting to disappear in the community, the traumatic impact of the pandemic forces the local community to adapt to the social changes it has caused. As a result, the forms of religious activities and rituals in the community during the pandemic must be adjusted based on the policies that have been established. Such issues bring about social transformation amid religious pluralism in Sukoreno. Sociologically, the pandemic causes unplanned (sporadic) and unwanted social changes (Wahyuningsih 2020).

The social transformation carried out by the community of Sukoreno manifests a form of social capital among religious communities in facing the transition from pandemic to post-pandemic. The main strengthening of social capital carried out by the community is through tolerance among religious communities. As *social relations* between religious communities will form *social networks* that play an important role in disciplining the community post-pandemic. According to (Putnam 2000), The tolerance that has been built is a bridging social capital consisting of *social networks, norms, and social trust (social trust)*.

Therefore, this article aims to optimize and reconstruct social capital in the midst of religious and belief diversity in society. Moreover, the transition from the pandemic to the post-pandemic period requires a social transformation that necessitates communities to become more self-reliant and maximize their potential and resources. Hence, the basis of interfaith tolerance is not only built on social solidarity but also serves as a foundation for strengthening social capital in pluralistic communities. Social solidarity is formed due to an institutionalized and ingrained culture of tolerance in the social and cultural practices of the

community, particularly in *bridging social capital*. Therefore, this research will elaborate more on the socio-religious transformation in Sukoreno Village and the implementation of social capital strengthening in the post-pandemic era

## **B. METHODOLOGY**

This research utilizes a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. The researcher, as a key instrument in this qualitative ethnographic research, attempts to describe the socio-cultural reality among different religious communities based on a relatively long period of time. According to Spradley (2016), ethnographic research enables the researcher to internalize information from observable and audible data (informants) so that they can draw an overall conclusion without any biased subjectification. Meanwhile, Yusanto (2020), explains that qualitative ethnographic research aims to obtain a holistic understanding of data based on the *natural setting* of the phenomena being studied. Ethnographic narratives also describe the emotional mood of an event or scene, so that there is a timeline that reveals the "*birth narrative*" of the subject being studied (*birth to 'present' account*), (Kurnia 2007) by emphasizing the cultural aspect in society (McCurdy, Spradley, and Shandy 2004).

The research location is in Sukoreno, Jember which is known as a *melting pot* area. The research subjects are a cross-religious in Sukoreno. Informants in this study include: local community, cross-religious figures, and village officials. Data collection techniques were carried out by observation, structured and unstructured interviews, and document studies. Meanwhile, the informant determination technique was done purposively. Purposively selected informants were chosen based on certain criteria expected to have accurate and relevant information (Setiawan 2018). The data sought in this research are: a portrait of

religious diversity in the Sukoreno community, a description of tolerance in the midst of religious pluralism, the pandemic and socio-religious transformation, the community's response to the pandemic, and forms of social relations and capital among people of different religions. The data processing technique used in this research is the interactive analysis technique of Miles Huberman, which involves data analysis, data reduction, and concluding or verifying the data.

### **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### ***1. Religious Tolerance in Sukoreno: Portrait, Dynamics, and Challenges***

The religious and belief heterogeneity in Sukoreno often receives special attention from the government, religious activists, and other communities. As a *melting pot* area, Sukoreno Village has religious and cultural pluralism that is used as an icon and reference for other communities in fostering tolerance among religious communities. The religions in Sukoreno Village consist of Islam, Hinduism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and are supplemented by the local beliefs of Sapta Darma and Ilmu Sejati. The strong paradigm among religious communities is inclusive and pluralistic, disregarding the fanaticism of each religion's truth in the midst of community life.

The pluralism ideology leads religious communities to fulfill human rights with absolute and hollygious (Devi and Andrian 2021). The people of Sukoreno village always demonstrate a tolerant attitude and uphold differences by promoting inter-religious harmony through theological and local cultural bases. Religious pluralism among communities contains positive values by accepting diversity as something empirical. In principle, pluralism is a transcendental reality that relates to logic in seeing



the differences of religious and belief values in order to create social cohesion.

The essence of developing interfaith dialogue is a guide in establishing relations in the socio-cultural field in Sukoreno Village. Real relationships between communities are demonstrated through authentic and dynamic harmony through the concept of religious freedom. Holistically, the authentic and dynamic aspects are oriented towards intensive interaction to reach fundamentalist interfaith agreements (Daeli and Zaluchu 2019). The central instrument of religious accommodation originates from the policies of the government and local religious figures in fostering interfaith cooperation. Interfaith relations in Sukoreno Village are built through theological discussions and physical activities, such as the construction of places of worship. Dialogues between religious leaders and government coalitions can realize social harmony and coexistence by emphasizing the need to prevent radicalization within the majority group (Kors and Nagel 2018).

If further examined, the practice of tolerance that develops amidst religious pluralism in Sukoreno Village creates a unique religious relation. A common phenomenon in society shows that there are 30 Family Cards (KK) identified as having religious differences within one family. Interfaith marriages have been normalized by local residents as a form of the right to freedom of religion and belief in Sukoreno Village. In line with this, the concept of religious moderation also supports the promotion of social justice, morality, freedom, and peace among religious communities in Indonesia (Sihombing, Abdullah, and Prasajo 2020). So the relationship between different religious communities in Sukoreno village has taken root as a value that is implemented in the social life of the community.

The collective social-religious activities that arise amidst religious pluralism constitute a construction of local wisdom

identity within the community. The internalization of religious tolerance in the village of Sukoreno is encapsulated in various cultural activities such as mutual cooperation in carrying out the ogoh-ogoh ceremony of the Hindu community, the pasucen ceremony of the Kejawen community, and the grebek suro ceremony (Hasanah, Perguna, et al. 2021). Just like the ogoh-ogoh religious ceremony that is held every Nyepi day, all cross-religious communities assist each other in disciplining society. In addition, the Pasucen ceremony, which is carried out as a ritual to ward off misfortunes, also involves the role of cross-religious figures in representing social cohesion (Hasanah, Hadi, and Widiyanto 2021). The phenomenon of social-religious constructiveness is built through cooperative relationship among religious communities.

As for the forums formed amidst religious pluralism in the village of Sukoreno, they include: (1) FKUB (Forum of Religious Community) consisting of representatives from each religious and belief group, which has the function of fostering harmony and theological dialogue. (2) Forum Silamas (Interreligious Fellowship Forum) consisting of cross-religious communities with the role of stabilizing the social and economic aspects of the community. Activities initiated by the Silamas and FKUB forums in the village of Sukoreno include social service activities in addressing the impact of Covid-19 for those in need (nusantaraterkini 2020). (3) The Pemula Community (Cross-religious Youth) has the responsibility to create social, cultural, and religious transformation through philanthropic and advocacy aspects. The series of religious ritual activities and other activities cannot be separated from local traditions as a noble study that unites religious communities in the village of Sukoreno. In line with the research Perbowosari (2019), States that *local wisdom* has the potential to strengthen the relationship of religiosity among communities

The tolerance that arises among religious communities essentially indicates attitudes and actions that aim to prohibit discrimination and marginalization. However, in the social, cultural, and religious contexts, the challenge of social cohesion lies in the internal and external aspects of the local community. The indications of the dichotomy of religious differences and belief systems in Indonesia cannot be separated from the politicization of religion that creates social boundaries (Ekaputri and Sugiarto 2021). It cannot be denied that social cohesion amidst the plural community of Sukoreno village can trigger conflict among religious communities and belief systems. The conflicts that have occurred in Sukoreno village include conflicts related to religious identity, the construction of places of worship, and the rejection of burial sites for adherents (Hasanah, Widiyanto, and Purwasih 2021).

The background of the conflict among religious communities is caused by several factors, including: first, government regulations that tend to be imbalanced; second, the strength of local culture influenced by the majority community; and third, sectarianism paradigms towards adherents (Hasanah, Widiyanto, et al. 2021). Basically, religion has a disintegrative function, which sets limits for its followers. Social cohesion can be eroded by excessive fanaticism and *truth claims* that reject the existence of minority groups. Along with the challenges faced by the diverse religious communities in Sukoreno Village, lies the danger of selfishness, only seeking absolute dominance in society. Exclusive, radical, and conservative attitudes are part of the ideology of religious communities that serve as the main indicators of the causes of social conflicts due to religious sentiments (Kusuma 2017).

The ambivalence towards the concept of religion through different terms can trigger conflicts and intolerance among communities. *Ambivalence of religion* shows the religious aspect as

both integrative and disintegrative (Kamal 2022). Religion as a disintegrative function can trigger truth claims that view other groups as deviant. This poses a challenge for the interfaith community in Sukoreno Village. Therefore, in this regard, the role of religious leaders is crucial to clarify things through a spiritual-humanist dialogue strategy. The FKUB (Interfaith Harmony Forum) is considered an important forum in Sukoreno Village as a means to strengthen tolerance among religious communities. The structured role of FKUB is included in the government bureaucracy in the socio-religious field, which has the authority to decide on a case through communicative and persuasive approaches (Pramesti 2020).

The strengthening of tolerance carried out by the FKUB (Interfaith Harmony Forum) in Sukoreno Village is conducted through several scheduled programs, including: Firstly, the internalization of religious values by each leader towards their followers. Such internalization activities refer to the strengthening of the right to freedom of religion and belief without any doctrinal or coercion under the auspices of the local FKUB. Sociologically, the activities carried out by FKUB leaders in Sukoreno Village lead to the concept of interreligious, namely the monoreligious approach. The *monoreligious* approach can be formed from the background of a homogenous community through the imposition of values and norms based on its religious guidelines (Kolb 2021).

*Secondly*, building positive attitudes and mentalities among religious communities through the study of religious moderation. The function of such studies is to exchange ideas to gain an informative understanding of other religions. In addition, religious moderation activities also aim to serve as a means to resolve conflicts among communities in Sukoreno Village. In line with the research findings Pabbajah (2021), In conclusion, religious moderation is an appropriate strategy to facilitate accommodation

among communities by fostering universal values related to differences in beliefs. Supported by the concept of *multireligiosity*, social solidarity can be realized through teaching religion to provide descriptive information about the positive values of other religions without direct contact (Saputra, Handayani, and Mujab 2020). The outcome obtained from the program is that religious communities have a better understanding of the theological goals of each religion. Therefore, the potential for social cohesion is realized through humanitarian activities, such as social service that demonstrates empathy and concern among religious communities.

*Thirdly*, social-religious dialogue highlights religious pluralism through discussions to reach a consensus. The main function of establishing the FKUB in Sukoreno Village is to act as a bridge in resolving religious issues in religious plurality. FKUB implements a social-religious dialogue program within the framework of theological socialization conducted once a week, led by religious and local government leaders. This activity is considered the most effective approach for the local community in overcoming conflicts and social problems, such as handling the Covid-19 pandemic in Sukoreno Village.

The interreligious dialogue represents an open interaction between religions as part of social reality, positioned as equal subjects, not just informative objects. The orientation of religious dialogue for the plural community of Sukoreno Village is a means of expanding diverse experiences, strengthening the principle of tolerance through agreement in resolving conflicts, and upholding the essence of religion as a source of peace among communities. The function of interreligious dialogue in general is regarded as a manifestation of attitudes of empathy (*respect*), friendship (*genuine friendship*), and honesty (*trust*), as well as enriching the perspective of different religious communities (Abroo and Andrabi 2020). As a

result, through this program, the FKUB hopes that the community will experience an increase in interactions between people of different religions. In addition, it can create a more open attitude towards the issues of its dialogue partners, namely issues related to religious matters in Desa Sukoreno.

## **2. The Pandemic and Social-Religious Transformation in Sukoreno Village**

The Covid-19 phenomenon in the Sukoreno village community tends to be responded to by linking it to theological and metaphysical elements. The paradigm formed in the community claims that Covid-19 is a 'pagebluk' or disease that comes from God (the Almighty) (Hasanah, Hadi, et al., 2021). According to local elders, the pandemic is considered a warning from God, with the outbreak of the disease demanding that people draw closer to their creator. Differences in views and handling related to Covid-19 fatalities in the community are caused by the social construction of each religious figure. The social context in Sukoreno village during the Covid-19 decade is related to interactions among the community and the loose implementation of religious rituals. This is oriented towards the doctrinal paradigm of 'pagebluk' that has previously been embedded in the community.

Interfaith participation through local knowledge related to Covid-19 reconstructs the form of cohesion in the village. Such stigma leads to the potential for cross-religious communities in Sukoreno village to face the pandemic through the religious and cultural beliefs that develop in society. Religious figures play an important role in deciding and opposing Covid-19 handling policies if they do not align with the values and beliefs that exist in the local community.

The crucial issue that currently poses a challenge to religious, political, educational, and cultural cohesion in society is the prolonged Covid-19 pandemic. The strict policies of the government in tackling the pandemic have become the backdrop for the decline of social interactions in the community. As a *melting pot* region, all layers of society in Sukoreno village are also affected by the impact of Covid-19, especially in social and religious activities that have undergone significant changes due to local government regulations.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (RI) has also issued a guide for the implementation of worship for all people in their respective homes (Fahiza and Zalikha 2021). In addition, efforts to tackle and prevent Covid-19 carried out by world governments, including Indonesia, involve social restrictions in the form of *social-physical distancing*. However, this policy has led to conflict among the pluralistic community in Sukoreno village. This is because religious figures represented by the head of FKUB have firmly stated that the religious policies issued by the government indirectly suppress the local community's beliefs in theological dialogue, thus causing intolerant attitudes.

Supported by the research conducted by Junaedi et al (2021), The policy issued by the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) has resulted in conflicts that lead to differing interpretations among Muslims regarding the permissibility of congregational prayer and the replacement of Friday prayers. The manipulation of public opinion by religious leaders has also become an indicator of policy changes in each region. As an effort to discipline the people amidst the pandemic, cross-religious leaders in Desa Sukoreno have implemented regulations based on local wisdom. The utilization of customary values is a local authority strategy to address economic and socio-religious fluctuations in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic (Yasa 2020).

Based on the local religious and cultural system, the phenomenon of rejecting the enforcement of restrictions on religious worship during the pandemic in Desa Sukoreno is underpinned by two factors. The indications of these factors include: first, based on a critical thinking ideology approach, restricting worship can actually lead to an increase in the level of depression among the faithful. The urgency of worship in places of worship with guidance from religious leaders is important during the pandemic to obtain mental, spiritual, and positive moral development. (Siallagan 2021). Closing religious and cultural activities will decrease the responsive and tolerant attitudes among communities, thus increasing the potential for depression in society. The proposal for regulations to the local government was initiated by Hindu and Islamic religious figures. The demand is related to creating a balanced relationship between disciplining the community, cultural environment, and approaching God

Based on the metaphysical approach, the second factor is that the restriction of religious rituals and social activities of the community will cause the wrath of *Batarakala* (the village guardian spirit). Strong perceptions of religious leaders and village elders (older people who have certain knowledge) claim that if religious and cultural activities are stopped, it will actually increase the mortality rate in the community. In line with the research" in English Suyadi et al (2020), Theological and metaphysical-based pandemic mitigation is relevant to the local beliefs of the Indonesian community regarding the interpretation of Covid-19 as a test of faith or a plague. People of various religions believe that the pandemic (Covid-19) will only strike those who frequently disobey God's commands. Therefore, in order to break the chain of Covid-19 transmission, a theological approach must be taken through a series of traditional rituals for the rejection of misfortune.



The rejection of the misfortune ritual becomes a strategy taken by traditional leaders, religious figures, and the community in breaking the chain of the pandemic within the local population (Hanif 2021). The ritual of rejecting misfortune carried out by the religious community in Sukoreno Village aims to calm the anger of *Batarakala*, to be kept away from the pandemic. Through the cooperation of various religious groups and the local government, traditional ceremonies are still held amidst the pandemic with limited attendance and following health protocols. This approach is oriented towards the local wisdom still strongly held by the religious community in responding to the pandemic through religious solidarity. Furthermore, the activity essentially represents a firm rejection and the cessation of cultural and religious activities in the local village.

The affiliation of religious organizations through social service and cultural rituals is a response from religious figures regarding the impact of the pandemic in Sukoreno Village. The role of religious figures and FKUB (Interfaith Harmony Forum) becomes a central figure in changing the dynamics of the economy, society, and religion in the community. Deliberation between the central government, local government, and religious figures creates local policies that have the potential to lead to responsive tolerance among communities facing the pandemic (Hanafi et al. 2020). Religious figures have their responses in addressing the pandemic in Sukoreno Village. The organization of religious worship is oriented towards limited differences in ethical and spiritual guidance among communities (Saragih 2021). The religious pluralism in Sukoreno Village also contributes to the containment of Covid-19 through solidarity among various religious communities.

The theological response of religious figures in Sukoreno Village in framing solidarity amidst and post-pandemic includes:

*firstly*, all religious communities in responding to the pandemic are more focused on calming panic through the religiosity aspect of worship rituals or weekly religious studies. Religious rituals during the pandemic are performed by all cross-religious communities to control individuals' emotions and souls through their respective teachings. The emphasis on xenophobia (excessive fear) amid the pandemic can be constructed by religious leaders with theological teachings to reduce social exclusion in the midst of religious practices (Wibisono, Truna, and Rahman 2021). Islamic religious leaders suggest that the appropriate strategy in combating the pandemic is through a proactive approach in maintaining mental and physical health, especially by promoting solidarity among different religious communities. Consistent with the opinions of the village elders, handling the pandemic through consistent interfaith solidarity serves as a comprehensive and moderate guideline in creating social transformation.

*Secondly*, the cross-religious community in Desa Sukoreno tends to claim that the pandemic is a punishment for the wrongdoing committed by humans. The psychosocial-spiritual model is employed by religious leaders to instill religious values in clinical practices during worship. Religiousness has the potential to encourage individuals to reflect on their lives concerning both religion and science in situations of pandemic upheaval (Dowson 2020). The stimulation of cultural-based religious rituals after the pandemic also takes place in an orderly manner. This is oriented towards the cooperation carried out by religious leaders in the FKUB forum. The role of FKUB after the pandemic is to supervise the practice of religious rituals according to health protocols, balance the economic aspect through social service, and construct awareness of living together as the basis for a sense of humanity through social solidarity.

### **3. Social tolerance and strengthening of social capital post-pandemic**

Religious tolerance can be interpreted as an attitude of mutual respect for the views and teachings of others. Communicative dialogue between religious communities reflects a spirit of tolerance toward acknowledging differences in beliefs (Kaha 2020). The religious tolerance of the community in Sukoreno represents social cohesion in the realization of religious freedom in Indonesia. As the cooperation among different religions in socio-cultural and economic aspects after the pandemic represents a harmonious relationship among religious communities. The covid-19 pandemic is constructed as an opportunity to form an ideal condition through the concept of interfaith by religious leaders in Sukoreno to strengthen the bond among different religious communities. Generally, the ideal condition (*state of nature*) in society can be referred to as social cohesion, if the social structure has functioned properly, there is no marginalization and exclusion, and there is equal access to social mobility (Fonseca, Lukosch, and Brazier 2019).

To diagnose the balance of the social system amid religious pluralism in society, it can be measured through social relations between communities, identification of each belief system, and *responsibility for the common good* through the principle of tolerance (Schiefer and van der Noll 2017). Basically, these three dimensions have been implemented by the community of Sukoreno Village as a form of social capital. Interfaith relations are formed within a community framework that has a role in nurturing, disciplining, and uniting the community in all social aspects. The balance between religious communities during and post-pandemic is crucial due to the disruption of social order and weakened policy authority that tends to be imbalanced. Social cohesion can be

realized if the social system is fulfilled and has a strong and structured social capital.

It cannot be denied that religious diversity in Sukoreno Village is still identified by the existence of social stratification in society. As there are majority groups occupied by official religions (Islam, Hinduism, Catholicism, and Protestantism) and minority groups (believers of other faiths). Such a problem will undoubtedly cause exclusions that hinder theological and socio-cultural strategies in overcoming the pandemic. It cannot be denied that religious diversity in Sukoreno Village is still identified by the existence of social stratification in society. As there are majority groups occupied by official religions (Islam, Hinduism, Catholicism, and Protestantism) and minority groups (believers of other faiths). Such a problem will undoubtedly cause exclusions that hinder theological and socio-cultural strategies in overcoming the pandemic (Bakker, de Koning, and van Tatenhove 2019). In line with the religious, racial, and cultural heterogeneity in Sukoreno Village, it can be used as an entity to see the potential of social cohesion that is built in the community.

Social capital can also be identified through several things, namely: 1) bonding, the relationship between individuals or groups who know each other. 2) bridging, broader relationships that deal with differences between groups. 3) linking, networks between institutions that have different positions and powers (Claridge 2018). Specifically, the social capital held by the community of Sukoreno Village is directed towards a series of values and norms based on local wisdom, which is highly upheld by cross-religious believers as a form of cooperation. As a social institution, social capital in Sukoreno Village can be analyzed through three things, namely: shared norms, social networks, and the cross-religious believers' trust that encourages the formation of social

collaboration for the common good. In line with Putnam (2000), The social modal is formed by *networks, norms, and social trust*

*First*, social networks are oriented towards the relationships that are built between groups as a central aspect in the formation of social cohesion. The implementation of social networks is realized in religious dialogues such as FKUB (Forum of Religious Community), Silamas (Cross-Community Social Gathering), and the Pemula community (Youth Across Religion). The role of the religious community is as follows: as a bridge for upholding human rights related to freedom of religion and belief, as a social watchdog in the midst and aftermath of the pandemic, and as a driver for the formation of heterogeneity in the midst of pluralism. In dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, social networks are emphasized by FKUB in order to build a sense of mutual cooperation and sympathy towards the surrounding environment.

The relationships formed by FKUB have created several programs in dealing with the pandemic in Sukoreno Village, including: (1) Tepo Sliro, which means loving each other as a manifestation of obedience to God. This program is promoted by the Sapta Darma spiritual leader with the aim of building empathy towards communities affected by the pandemic. (2) The strengthening of human rights in the Religious Harmony Forum (KBB) is a main program emphasized by the government and religious leaders in the midst of the pandemic. Limiting social space for subaltern groups represents a form of marginalization that contradicts human rights. Through the human rights strengthening program, the government launches socialization activities and social service programs to stabilize the post-pandemic society based on socio-theology. 3) *pembuyak pagebluk* (pandemic repellent), This program was established by the youth across religions with the aim of maintaining the health stability of the community in the midst of the pandemic. The activities

planned in this program include village clean-up activities, disinfection spraying, mask distribution, and health education regarding the impacts of the pandemic.

*Secondly*, shared norms are relevant to the social values agreed upon by the community. Norms are essentially a set of rules created by the local community as a form of obedience manifested through behavior and social encouragement. The shared norms established by the community during the pandemic and continue to be implemented post-pandemic are related to health, social welfare, and religion. The norms in Sukoreno Village are always related to the theological and metaphysical aspects that have been agreed upon by religious leaders and village elders for generations. During the pandemic, some norms were that were previously established and known by the community, including: firstly, the norm of *purna wicara*, which aims to remind each other in the community amidst the pandemic.

*Norma Purna Wicara* is oriented towards customary regulations to encourage the community to speak about their fasting practices, especially in the context of the pandemic. The belief that is still embedded in the community amidst the pandemic is due to the fading of morals and one's closeness to God. Through this *Purna Wicara* mastery, the community is obligated to maintain their health by consuming traditional remedies, adhering to the policies of the *Pembuyak Pagebluk* program, and preventing crowds according to the applicable regional regulations.

The second norm, "*panetep ati*", is a norm that relates to the relationship between humans and their God. This norm is established by the local village elders to provide peace of mind to the community in facing the pandemic. In this norm, the obligation that must be carried out by each individual is to perform traditional ceremonies regularly every full moon. Furthermore,

"*panetep ati*" also relates to the responsibility of each individual to maintain physical and spiritual health amidst the pandemic. The norm in Sukoreno village is more focused on cultural and theological aspects, thus the context of obedience is higher because it is related to metaphysical strength. The norm is also based on social sanctions in the community. The theological and metaphysical beliefs provide a strong conviction to the community that violating the norm will result in calamity in one's life.

The norm can support regional policies to prevent public panic during a pandemic. Furthermore, the norm actually increases individual obedience to comply with applicable regulations. As HC. Kelman (1998) stated, in Ali (1998) There are three contexts of individual obedience, including: *First*, compliance obedience, which is obedience to regulations due to fear of sanctions. *Second*, identification obedience, obedience due to fear of damaging good relationships with others. *The third one* is internalization, obedience resulting from rules towards intrinsic values that individuals fear. During the pandemic, these three obediences are in line with the norm of *Purna Wicara* and *Panetep Ati*. People of all religions are obedient to policies due to the desire to maintain social cohesion in the community. The obedience of community members also arises from the push of moral obligation and is supported by legal sanctions imposed during the pandemic.

The *third* norm is *trust* between people of different religions. The strong religious rituals practiced by the community are used as a means of bridging the pandemic in the midst of the heterogeneity of religious communities. The practice of religious rituals and local beliefs serves as a basis for strengthening the physical and psychological well-being of the community. As in the local epidemiology of the Covid-19 pandemic, the community tends to be oriented towards religious aspects through the transmission of religious ideas using an epidemiological model (the role of

religious practices) (Wildman et al. 2020). The beliefs that are still widely held in the community of Sukoreno Village in facing the pandemic include: (1) The implementation of the *pasucen* ritual, which is one of the traditional ceremonies aimed at cleansing oneself from all sins. The prolongation of the pandemic is caused by the warning of batarakala to humans who disobey their God (Hasanah, Hadi, et al. 2021).

(2) The implementation of the *Ngeteh Rempon Sewu* tradition (drinking herbal tea made from various spices). *Rempon Sewu* is an herbal tea recipe that has been passed down from generation to generation by the ancestors of the people of Sukoreno Village. The mixture of *Rempon Sewu* comes from spice plants that grow abundantly in the local area. The entire community believes that by drinking *Rempon Sewu*, they will be protected from the pandemic, as they will receive protection from the guardians of the area. (3) *Nasi wong-wongan* ritual is performed by Hindu devotees. The purpose of this ritual is to get closer to the gods and eliminate all evils in the world.

(4) *Pandan eri* is a tradition of placing pandan plants with onions in front of houses to ward off epidemics (5) "*Tetek melek*" is a symbol believed by the local community to ward off "*pagebluk*" or pandemics. Social capital related to this belief is oriented towards local epidemiology that is related to mysticism and theology. Religious communities in Sukoreno Village can be seen as an expression of existence and self-actualization within the context of material-physical study when carrying out religious rituals and adhering to norms.

The implementation of religious rituals, traditional ceremonies, and reinforcement of norms carried out by the community of Sukoreno Village, is theologically interpreted as an effort to achieve heterogeneity. The formation of tolerance and cooperation among communities amidst the pandemic is due to the



presence of good reciprocal relationships. The actualization of reciprocal relationships is represented through the social capital of the Sukoreno community in facing the pandemic through socio-metaphysical-theological aspects. Reciprocal relationships are established between the religious context as an internal factor and the social context as an external factor (Alexander 2019).

The reciprocal relationship implemented through social capital in Sukoreno includes a social network that creates relations and cooperation, thus fostering interfaith dialogue. Additionally, social capital takes the form of norms related to reciprocal aspects between humans and the environment or socio-metaphysical forces. Meanwhile, the social capital in the form of the community's beliefs represents the reciprocal relationship between humans and their God (socio-theological). Therefore, through social capital, there is potential to strengthen tolerance among communities without eroding norms, traditional beliefs, and religious laws that apply in the Sukoreno region as the main capital of plural society in overcoming the pandemic and facing a more harmonious life after the pandemic.

#### **D. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The manifestation of interfaith social-solidarity during the Covid-19 in Jember can be used as a *role model* for promoting harmony based on social, cultural, and theological foundations. The outbreak of Covid-19 and the government's policy of redirecting all social and religious activities has resulted in significant impacts on the community.

The impacts include the disruption of cultural and religious rituals, a decline in income and the economy of the community, depression and mental stress, as well as other effects. The emergence of the pandemic, along with strict government regulations, did not make the community more peaceful and

prosperous but instead created psychological pressure. Therefore, the potential for religious tolerance that was previously highly respected by religious communities is implemented in the agenda of religious social movements to build solidarity and community empowerment after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The orientation of the social action is demonstrated through the culturally-based COVID-19 rapid response agenda, social service, as well as economic transformation through the optimization of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and village potentials, with the assistance of local Karang Taruna and FKUB. The presence of social capital in the form of solidarity and religious tolerance, it would be sufficient to help reconstruct the awareness to rise together with the level of faith and optimism in the community. Through *bridging social capital* among religious communities, it contributes to stabilizing public panic as well as building social transformation as a manifestation of empowered solidarity. After the pandemic, the community in Sukoreno Village actually has better mental and physical health as well as economic resilience.

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